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REPORT ON

# CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON FAITH AND ORDER  
Montreal, Canada 12-26 July 1963

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THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION ON  
CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

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World Council of Churches  
COMMISSION ON FAITH AND ORDER  
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## PREFACE

The secretariat of the Faith and Order Department in the World Council of Churches, in anticipation of stimulating discussions to come, presents with pleasure this report of the Commission on Christ and the Church. The report has a double intention and is addressed to two circles of readers. In the first instance it is addressed to the delegates of the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, meeting in Montreal, July 12-26, 1963. Sent to them in advance of that Conference, it seeks to provide perspective and depth for their discussions of a wide range of issues. At the Conference it will serve a more sharply focussed function, as the foundation for the work of Section I, called *The Church in the Purpose of God*. In the second instance, the document has a less immediate but no less important target, inasmuch as it is addressed to all Christian churches as a stimulus to their critical self-appraisal and an invitation for them to share more fully in ecumenical dialogue with other churches concerning the inner and outer structure of 'the one holy catholic and apostolic Church'.

The document has also a double authorship. As even the most casual reader will detect, two quite distinct reports are presented, which at first sight have little more in common than a title. At its very inception, a single Commission was split into two, and these halves have been unable to manage sufficient collaboration to produce a single report. On only two occasions has it been possible for them to meet together, in Evanston, Illinois, in 1954, and in Tutzing, Bavaria, in 1959. To be sure, there has been constant interchange of papers and personnel, so that the right hand has often known what the left was doing, but there has been no strong desire to divide the field so as to avoid duplication, nor vigorous effort to harmonize the texts so as to assure coherence. Any similarity of conviction the one with the other has been coincidental, and can be interpreted as marking the growing congeniality among theologians from opposite shores of the Atlantic. The North American statement appears first simply because it was finished first; readers should therefore study the two statements, at least at the outset, as quite independent formulations by separate groups.

The story of this particular Commission begins with the Third World Conference on Faith and Order, which convened in Lund, Sweden, in 1952. At that Conference it became quite obvious to virtually all participants that conflicts in ecclesiology are rooted in divergent christologies. Christians are drawn closer to each other only by being drawn closer to Christ (Faith and Order Paper No. 15, p. 5) and by discerning in 'the shape of his life... the shape of the Church's life.' They discover that the most stubborn obstacles to unity may yield surprising opportunities for mutual understanding when the life of the Church is set within the perspectives of the person and work of its Lord. Accordingly, in virtually

every section of the Conference the conviction was expressed that further advance in ecumenical work requires 'that the doctrine of the Church be treated in close relation both to the doctrine of Christ and to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit' (*ibid.* pp. 11, 13, 15, 25, 29, 31). Quite naturally, therefore, the appointment of this Commission was one of the most tangible results of the Lund Conference. This took place in Switzerland in 1953, when the terms of reference for the work of the Commission were defined.

In 1954, the Commission held its first session in Evanston, Illinois, in connection with the Second Assembly of the World Council. This occasion was propitious, because members of the Commission had helped in preparing a document for the Assembly (Faith and Order Paper No. 18) and in shaping the Assembly document on *Our Oneness in Christ and our Disunity as Churches* (The Evanston Report, N.Y., Harpers, 1955, pp. 82-97). In its separate session, the Commission discussed several essays and assigned various research projects, agreeing that each section would meet annually.

The years 1955 to 1957 mark in some ways the most productive years in the life of the Commission. In addition to the annual circulation and discussion of cyclostyled essays, the co-operative study prompted the publication in various languages of numerous articles and books. During these years the European section produced a major document on baptism which prompted vigorous discussion in the 1957 meetings and wide repercussions among the churches. The North American section actively participated in the Oberlin Conference in the same year, presenting through their chairman a wide-ranging report of their consensus (Faith and Order Papers No. 22, p. 9; No. 23, p. 18; No. 25, pp. 13-20; *The Nature of the Unity We Seek*, St. Louis, Bethany Press, 1958, pp. 52-78).

The following triennium, 1958-1960, reached its climax in the preparation and publication of the interim report of the Commission under the title *One Lord, One Baptism* (London, SCM Press; and Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1960). After brief separate sessions in 1958 (Faith and Order Paper No. 26, pp. 10 f), the longest session in the history of the commission was held in Tutzing, Bavaria. During a fortnight of intensive drafting, two substantial documents were prepared, representing the joint industry and judgment of both sections. These documents, therefore, express the common mind of the whole Commission. They were formally presented and thoroughly examined at the triennial meeting in St. Andrews, Scotland, and published during the same year (Faith and Order Papers No. 27, pp. 7 f, pp. 12-16; No. 31, pp. 17-24). *One Lord, One Baptism* has received wide circulation, has evoked considerable response, and has proved helpful to study groups in many countries as they have been preparing for the Montreal rendezvous. One might infer from the term 'interim report' that the 1960 volume constitutes the first draft of the final reports. That is not the case. The final reports from the two continents are newly composed along quite different outlines. They do not, of course, repudiate the earlier position, but they seek to deal more adequately with the theme assigned. In any case, the reports now presented to the churches constitute the completion of the Commission's work pursuant to the Lund bequest, and therefore the termination of this particular segment in the history of Faith and Order studies.

There remains to me, then, only the pleasant duty on behalf of the secretariat to express deep gratitude to the officers and members of the Commission for their decade of co-operation, and to voice the confidence that their work will be wel-

comed by the churches as part of that 'reasonable service' which we all owe to the Lord of the Church. This gratitude and this confidence are all the more genuine in my case, since I have had the quite unusual privilege of sharing in the annual sessions of this particular Commission more fully than any other person. Only a participant in these sessions can gain any just impression of the physical energy, the mental acumen, the irenic argumentation, the spiritual devotion, and the gifts of grace which are involved in an ecumenical project of this dimension. Such things can never be reduced to the inked pages of a final report.

PAUL S. MINEAR.





# PART I

## REPORT OF THE THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION ON CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

(North American Section)

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Our Common Affirmation

With gratitude and thanksgiving, the Commission on Christ and the Church acknowledges the blessings which have accrued to its members from their joint studies since the formation of the Commission in 1954. We do not claim that by examining the nature of the Church in the light of its relation to its Lord we have succeeded in solving all the problems which have perplexed and divided Christendom, but we have found that our approach has made the formidable controversies of the past seem less intractable, and we have been led further into the understanding of God's self-revelation which is the foundation of all Christian unity.

The Church is that community in which Christ manifests his Lordship by the power of the Holy Spirit, in which he claims for himself the kingdoms of this world, in which he declares his judgement and bestows forgiveness, and in which he is worshipped and adored by those whom he has made members, through the Holy Spirit, of his mystical body. Hence the Church cannot be understood apart from the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Yet the Church must be distinguished from the Lord Jesus Christ, who in his earthly ministry gathered disciples and fitted them to take their place in the Church of Pentecost. It must be distinguished also from the Holy Spirit, who enlivens it and empowers it to carry on Christ's ministry in and for the world.

In the Church the triune God carries on his creative and redemptive work. Here Christ proclaims his Gospel; here men receive that Gospel — and both by the Spirit's power and authority. Here Christ ministers to the needs of men, bears their burdens and pain, enters with them into suffering and death — again by the Spirit. Here by baptism of water and the Spirit, men are made members of his body and participant in his death and resurrection. Here he gives himself to those who gather at his holy table.

As God is one in the mystery of the Trinity, so the Church is one. This oneness is both beginning and end, both God's gift and his promise to his Church. In Christ's baptism, at his table, and through the variety of gifts in the one body, the unity which the Lord has established for his people is expressed. This gift and promise to the Church becomes gift and promise to the world through the Church. Hence, the Church lives its life in and for the world. Christ's love for the world is to be manifested in the Church's life and in its witness before men. Hostilities in the world are being overcome by Christ the Lord, through the working of his Holy Spirit, as men respond to him in faith and love and true repentance; for he is in fact the Lord of all things. Hostilities among Christians betray the one Lord who has created one people to bear witness to the unity of all mankind under God in the lordship of Christ by the Holy Spirit.

The way to Christ is the way to reconciliation. Christ unites in himself the whole of humanity. He is the Last Adam, the New Man, the One in whom all men are refashioned into the image of God in which they are created and from which through sin they are fallen. A divisive witness to this one Lord therefore denies not only the unity given to the Church, but also the re-creation of the one human community in and by Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father.

## B. The Approach to Our Task

The preceding affirmations of faith, which we all share, have been confirmed through our nine years of intensive and diverse studies. They represent our agreed convictions concerning the unity of the Church of Christ, which will be clarified in the body of our report. We now seek in what follows to speak in a more direct way about the Commission's approach and method of work.

The witness in Scripture to Jesus Christ and to the Church has been our norm throughout our work ; and this in two senses. First, we have always started with the biblical witness and have sought to be led by this witness in our further deliberations. Second, we have always returned to the biblical witness to Jesus Christ, in order to see where our findings and reflections have led us, and the degree to which these may claim to be true to the given sources of our faith. We have studied the Scriptures in the context of the living experience of the Church and have believed that the Holy Spirit still takes of the things of Christ and shows them to his people. We thank God that in our years of meeting we have found an unexpected measure of unity. We dare to say that this unity is not of our own making but is a gracious working of the Spirit in sinful men who have sought, however imperfectly, to know the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

Our purpose in prefacing the detailed report by a statement of affirmation is to suggest that all our work has been conducted in the setting of praise, thanksgiving, and affirmation. We have started with doxology and proclamation because it has been our conviction that the task to which we have devoted our time and effort is not first a doctrine of the person of Christ, a doctrine of the Church, or even a theological consideration of the problems involved in discussion of Christian unity. Our task is first to point to the living Lord himself. It is he, and he only, who is the real subject of the New Testament witness on whom the Church utterly depends.

According to the New Testament and also according to the cumulative testimony of the Church, the shattering impact of Christ and the Gospel drives men to praise and proclamation. From this, christology and pneumatology follow ; they are dependent upon the real presence of Christ and the Spirit in the Church. Furthermore, precisely because it is the living Christ and he alone who incorporates men into his body, the truth to which the Christian points and by which he lives can best be apprehended 'doxologically' — which is to say that credal statements are shaped by the structure of worship, praise, and thanksgiving directed to God, and it is within the structure of worship that they can best be interpreted. Again, because the living Christ and he alone brings men into his body, the affirmations which in Christian faith are made about him — as Lord, as Saviour, as head of the race as well as head of the Church — are best understood when seen in the context of the 'proclaimed' Word. So it is that proclamation and praise, *kerygma* and *leitourgeia*, are the beginning of all Christian reflection and the ground to which such reflection must always return.

Yet the doxological and kerygmatic approach involves and demands theological articulation. Kerygma and dogma are not antithetical but interdependent. The Nicene Creed and the Chalcedonian formulation reflect a double movement within the life of the Christian community : the movement of praise and adoration, and the movement of reflection and debate. That includes even polemical struggle with the distortion and denial (the 'heresy') which would destroy the wholeness

of faith. The living presence and action of the triune God requires from us consistent effort to understand and to define the relationship between God and his creation, seen for Christian faith in the light of his central revelatory act in Jesus Christ. Here is one example of the ways in which the Commission has sought to rise above apparent contradictions and disjunctions, by an effort to combine acuteness and wholeness of perception, in the context of praise and proclamation.

The intention, perspective, mode and mood of the Commission's work may be described by some meanings of the word 'catholicity'<sup>1</sup>. This term has usually been applied to the object of our study — the Church catholic. But we are convinced that it can also be applied to the orientation and methods of study itself. Indeed, it is entirely appropriate that the character of the object should itself determine the character of the study.

What then do we mean, in this context, by 'catholicity' in method? We mean that thinking becomes a reflection upon the work of God as a whole, from beginning to end. It participates in the fullness of God's design to sum up all things in Christ. It deals with the Church as a whole — its membership in heaven and on earth, drawn from all tribes and tongues; its common heritage from all ages; its apostolic mission to all people; its emancipation from slaveries to the provincial and the partial; its stewardship of the truth and holiness which God has bestowed<sup>2</sup>.

A method which is rightly called catholic therefore stems from response made in faith to the triune God's activity; it seeks to understand the fullness and wholeness of God's activity; it is a form of response to the new creation, the new world with its new horizons. Catholicity does not mean a comprehensiveness unconcerned for truth and right. It is not a justification for indiscriminating eclecticism, nor does it permit vague inclusivism. It is essentially the recognition of the communion among men which God produces and nurtures through the living power of Christ and of the Spirit, and within which men may grasp aright the inclusive range of his love.

### C. Our Method of Study

Our procedures have been governed by the 'catholic' methodology here described; and this may be illustrated by the Commission's approach to some of the complex issues which have been before us.

First, we note the position which has been taken in respect to the Holy Scriptures. For the sake of brevity, we must be content here simply with indicating a few of the assumptions which were first tacitly utilized, almost unconsciously present to us in our discussion, and which only later came to be discussed openly in the light of our experience. The whole Bible, and not merely some fraction of it, must be used as a guide to faith and a clue for doctrinal reflection. Yet it would be contrary to the intention of the biblical writers themselves to restrict

<sup>1</sup> In this report, when this term is placed in quotation marks, the Commission indicates that it is using the term in this special, and somewhat unusual, way.

<sup>2</sup> A fuller discussion of elements in the catholicity of the Church may be found in our chairman's essay published in the Oberlin volume, *The Nature of the Unity We Seek*, Bethany Press, 1958, pp. 74-77.

Christian thought to the letter of the Bible or to confine ourselves to biblical terminology. The Bible itself does not suggest a radical disjunction between Hebraic and Hellenistic modes of thought, which would require a repudiation of one or the other of them. It does not support either a rejection of critical study or an indulgence in speculation uncontrolled by the history of God's actual revealing of himself in the life of Israel and in Jesus Christ. Doctrinal thinking needs to be as free and as controlled, as flexible and as firmly grounded, as diverse and as centred, as biblical thought itself. Our conceptions of the Church must do justice both to the unanimity of testimony and to the variety of views which we find within the New Testament ; we must value both the metaphorical richness of the images used there and also the central focus of those images. We must be loyal to the Lord and faithful to the variety of conceptions of his person and his work.

Once again, because of the character of the biblical witness and the continuing witness of the Church, any radical disjunction between the 'historical' and the 'metaphysical' must be repudiated. The same holds true for the radical disjunctions sometimes made between Scripture and tradition, between the Old Testament and the New Testament, between creation and redemption, between futurist and realized eschatology. In each of these instances, the realism of biblical thought prevents us from putting asunder that which God himself has joined together.

Furthermore, the demands of careful exegetical work are to be fully respected ; but we are convinced that these demands do not collide with or render impossible equally careful theological construction. The relative absence of synoptic systematic construction in biblical thinking does not cancel the need for such construction on our part, although it does lead us to humility concerning the adequacy and ultimacy of any such construction. We must seek to be as critical of our own use of the Bible as of another's use. This implies avoidance of an uncritical appeal to biblical texts as if all texts must be accorded an equally authoritative finality, and also of the assumption that when we use some specific biblical word (e. g. *koinonia*) we are necessarily being faithful to the rich meanings of that word in its various contexts.

That is to say, we did not use the Bible as a kind of reference book for settling questions, in the fashion of a 'perfect dictionary' or a verbal court of last appeal. We did use the Bible as sure witness to him who is the source and norm and goal of truth, and to his activity among men. In perceiving the illuminating and empowering centre of the Bible in the living Lord Jesus Christ, we tried to avoid the all-too-simple ways of conceiving the relationship between this centre and the whole course of the biblical record. We did indeed read the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament witness to Christ ; yet we also continued to study the Old Testament record in its own content and in its own integrity as witness to God working in history and in the lives of men. Concern for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which more and more followed upon our attention to the person and work of Jesus Christ, led us both backward from the Pauline understandings into the prophetic uses, and forward from the Pentateuchal stories of creation to the apocalyptic visions of Revelation. Our concern for the centre did not allow us to ignore the endless pluralism in the Spirit's activity and in the conscious responses which have been made to that activity. We have found that openness to the variety-in-unity of the biblical writings is an essential expression of faith in the one holy catholic Church and a manifestation of that 'catholicity'

in method which is alone appropriate to our study. We are convinced that whenever awareness of this 'catholicity' of the whole Bible is deficient, the conception of catholicity in the Church will be similarly deficient.

In other areas, too, the Commission has felt itself obliged to reject dichotomies which have often been adopted in theological circles. We have not found congenial the disjunction sometimes drawn between the person of Christ and his work, nor the related dichotomies between ontology and soteriology, and between incarnation and atonement. Contrasts may be helpful at times; distinctions are invaluable for deepening perception. But sheer disjunction is far from being helpful; it is but another instance of man's attempting to put asunder what God has given as one. Similarly, the sharp separation between the New Testament witness to Christ and the credal definitions of Nicea and Chalcedon has seemed to us impossible to maintain, even if one wished to maintain it. To be sure, individual members of the Commission have found one theological formulation or another more adequate, but all have agreed that Christian churches should not be divided by particular theological loyalties. Rather, the churches should help one another to a new understanding and appropriation of the christology of the early Church. The variety of expression should not be allowed to obscure continuity of intention. Categories of interpretation — metaphysical, historical, doxological, scriptural, kerygmatic, systematic — can complement each other in witness to the living Lord.

So, too, in respect to the trinitarian faith of the Church. Concern for a whole or catholic christology leads inevitably to the confession of the triune God. A disjunction between christology and trinitarian belief is intolerable. Belief in the inseparability of Jesus Christ and the Church is tenable only in the context of trinitarian belief. On the other hand, trinitarian belief must be centred in and oriented around God's focal self-disclosure in Christ.

Related to this issue is another. Should a study of the relationship of Christ and his Church include a careful treatment of Christian understanding of the world? The Commission's response has been a clear and definite 'Yes.' The concern for the trinitarian faith requires full treatment of the Church-world relationship; above all, the doctrine of salvation in Christ positively demands it. A comprehensive theology forbids any facile delimitation of the world from the Church, or the Church from the world. But if this be granted, what then about our procedure? Does a proper method demand that the study proceed in the sequence Christ-world-Church rather than in the progression Christ-Church-world? We have used both orders.

The terms of our initial assignment focussed our discussions inevitably upon the inseparability of Christ and the Church. Yet it is only by a cosmic victory that the Church exists at all. We can never apprehend the fullness of the Church apart from an apprehension of the fullness of God; and this apprehension entails a profound gratitude for the creation and the redemption of all things in Christ. Hence we are obliged to consider the meaning and place of the whole creation in the purpose of God. Our thinking about the world must be governed by the central revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and a view of the creation which gives due centrality to that revelation is the inevitable consequence of a right recognition of Christ's lordship. On the other hand, a sound ecclesiology must be related to a Christian understanding of creation. That is to say, a true understanding of the catholicity of the Church requires a profound sense of the oneness of the

world in God ; and conversely, our awareness of the unity of the world in creation and in salvation is directly related to our grasp of the oneness of the Church of Christ as the instrument for the divine purpose in that world.

In yet another area, the Commission was confronted by a baffling problem. How could we deal adequately with the relation of the Church to Israel ? From the start we were all of one mind in our conviction that because of Jesus Christ's living, intimate, utterly indisputable relationship to Israel and to the Church, we cannot ignore the Church's relationship to Israel. This was indeed given to us in our assignment. We recognize that a theological statement of this relationship between the Church and Israel (both ancient and modern) is necessary ; we are convinced that this must mean also a careful and discerning trinitarian analysis ; and we know that such an analysis requires our doing full justice to the newness of the New Creation, without undervaluing the New Testament affirmation of God's faithfulness to the prophets, to Moses, to Abraham, and to Adam. Furthermore, this newness is inseparable, on the one hand, from the actualities of the eschatological future in Christ and the Holy Spirit, and on the other, from the true presence of God with Israel under the earlier covenants. But we must confess that our findings in this particular area are indeed provisional and partial.

Other aspects of our methodology will become apparent in the constructive statement which follows. The Commission has been of one mind in stressing the unity of God and man in Jesus Christ ; in seeking to affirm this unity in its character as *scandalon* and *mysterion* ; in the unabashed awareness of the multiple paradoxes which this position entails, such as humiliation-exaltation, servant-king, death-life, abysmal weakness-ultimate power. We have examined with care the ways in which the classical definition of the two natures of the one Lord Jesus Christ can be employed analogically in the definition of the Church. We have found analogical reasoning both valuable and inescapable ; but we have also become convinced of its limitations and dangers. Pressed too far, any analogical formula proves misleading. The New Testament uses not one but many forms of figurative comparison and contrast ; and its reliance upon so many interlocking and interacting images succeeds in conveying a richness and a complexity of meaning which alone do justice to the many facets of the Christ-Church relationship.

Modes of thinking about this relationship must be adapted to the biblical insistence both on the presence of Christ within his body and also on the headship of Christ over his body. They must also be adapted to the truth that in speaking of both Christ and the Church we are inevitably dealing simultaneously with what has been, with what is now, and with what is to be. We must reckon with the constant temptation to use even the best analogical reasoning to vindicate our own conceptions of unity and to condemn all others. Our own work for unity may be of the devil, and what appears to us to be divisible may be of God. Because we are dealing with God's historical work in the world which is his creation and over which and in which he is sovereign, our method needs to be flexible enough to take account of his freedom as well as of his astounding mercy. It is impossible for sinful men to be as catholic in their perceptivity as God in his callings and gifts. We can only seek, by his grace, to develop modes of thought which will be as discriminating as the terrible sword of judgement exhibited in Christ's self-sacrifice, and as inclusive as the boundless mercy which is mediated through that same act of victory.

Because our thought, study and discussion have moved in the direction of 'catholic' comprehensiveness, it is difficult conclusively to answer the question :



where, apart from the living Lord himself, have you established the *locus* of authority? No simple answer can be given. In part this is because we did not deem it necessary or wise to seek a precise definition of this *locus*. We proceeded with the business of interpretation without first attempting to solve all the perplexing hermeneutical riddles. We did so because we sensed that all the alternative definitions of an authoritative norm which are now current in the churches fall short of the true catholicity of Christ and his Church. They have served polemical purposes, they have become the property of conflicting traditions, and they tend to be based upon what we believe to be untenable disjunctions (e.g. Scripture or tradition). But above all, it has seemed to us that the desire for any single definition is thoroughly unbiblical and often betrays a lack of confidence in the actual authority of the living Lord himself. A doctrine of inspiration is then substituted for the actuality of the Holy Spirit's gifts — and this occurs all the more easily when the doctrine finds stronger formulation. The assumptions and presuppositions attending the question 'By what authority?' are often incompatible with the kind of authority exercised over creation by the triune God and with the manifestation of authority in the life of the incarnate Word. His authority was not such as to demand assent but rather such as to elicit consent.

Thus we have gone about our common task together, loyal to the one holy catholic Church, grateful for the tokens of oneness in Christ which we have glimpsed, humbled by the disclosure of our blindness, thinking together as those who in faithfulness to their own separate traditions would yet apprehend the wholeness and fullness of the one catholic tradition, and finding in the process ample evidence of unity in Christ — a unity which, even while it deepens our ecumenical despair, also heartens us and gives us ecumenical courage.

## II. CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

### A. Jesus Christ

#### 1. *Christ the Lord*

Jesus is a figure of human history, who lived and died at a certain time and place. What we know of him and of his works, we know almost entirely on the testimony of those who believed in him as Saviour and Lord. Tacitus, to be sure, tells us that *Christus* died under Pontius Pilate (*Annals* XV, 44). But he has occasion to mention the fact because among Nero's victims were the Christians of Rome, who had found life and hope and joy in what was to the supercilious Roman historian *exitabilis superstitio*. Jesus can be accepted or rejected or ignored, but cannot be comfortably placed in any of our merely human categories, applicable though many of them are to him. In the experience of the early Church it was found that he first filled and then broke the categories of religious tradition. It was true, but not enough, to call him 'Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee' (Matthew 21. 11); true but not enough to say that God had made the crucified one both Lord and Messiah (Acts 2. 36). The latter word has in this connection become a technical term, and in its Greek form (Christ) we use it practically as a proper name. But in itself it is of course a description — 'the Anointed One.' Applied of old to prophets, priests, and kings, it becomes in Christian usage the most familiar and compendious term for him on whom the Spirit was poured without measure, and in whom ancient prophecy, priesthood, and kingship reached their fulfilment and their term.

But the casual use of the word 'Christ' and its various cognates, including even 'christology,' needs to be watched, lest they become mere labels. It is better perhaps to concentrate on the first part of the phrase 'our Lord Jesus Christ' (Galatians 1. 3) in speaking of him whom the Churches of the World Council confess as 'God and Saviour, according to the Scriptures'. Whether Jesus is formally called 'God' in the New Testament is not really the central question, especially since the first century was an age of many *theoi* (I Cor. 8. 5). What mattered was, and is, the realization that in this human life God is present, 'in Christ reconciling the world to himself' (II Cor. 5. 19). He is what he is and does what he does because in him God's Word is decisively uttered for us and in him is with us in the world in the actual flesh of a human life (John 1. 14). Modern as well as ancient exegetes may find themselves baffled by the effort of describing the possible self-consciousness of a man who is so close to us all and yet so unique, so close to us in the very uniqueness which distinguishes him from us. But we need not hesitate to affirm that he was aware that he 'came from God' and after his voluntary passion would 'go to God' again (John 13. 3).

Christology can never be a purely intellectual discussion of who the Saviour is and what he does. It is always a thankful confession that 'for us men and for our salvation' (Nicene Creed) the Son of God lived and died and rose again. Christian theology generally is not merely intellectual speculation but an act of gratitude — thankful praise of the Redeemer. It is a happy coincidence that *orthodoxia* in Greek suggests 'right worship' as well as 'sound teaching,' thus justifying the Slavonic translation *pravoslavnie*, the true glorification.

In the development of ancient christology the Church seems superficially to be rejecting one technical error after another, as the pendulum of heresy swings from side to side. Docetism must not consider that the divine Son of God is not really man. Arianism must not take refuge in the apparently easy concept of a mediator who is more than human but less than divine. Nestorianism cannot be allowed to divide the person, nor Monophysitism to confound the natures of Christ. However orthodox his intentions, Theodore 'the Interpreter' of Mopsuestia cannot be approved when he tries to avoid mystery and paradox by suggesting that doubting Thomas divided his confession, addressing 'My Lord' to the man before him and 'My God' to the deity on high (John 20. 28). But through all technicalities of ancient or modern christology the question is not primarily 'what do we think?', but 'who is he in whom we put our trust?' The Nicene Creed is indeed a statement of faith and not simply a series of true propositions; and the Chalcedonian definition, though more formally presented, has the same basic character. It does not simply state that there is one Christ, divine and human, but proclaims that in the fullest sense of the word 'we confess one Christ... truly God and truly man.'

Jesus Christ remains a paradox in history — 'that strange man upon the Cross' from whom George Tyrrell could never escape, and from whose strangeness we can escape neither by rejection nor by faith, because the power of the Cross to save operates even through its power to offend. Christ poses questions which can never be answered in purely historical terms. To adapt the ritual inquiry of the Passover service, 'Why is this crucifixion different from all other crucifixions? why is this life different from all other lives? why is this Resurrection different from all other hope of the world to come?' It is because here we find in human life the full presence of God. More properly, the Saviour finds us, and so we discover in our own lives the power of his life, his sacrifice, his rising again. He is born in our hearts by faith, and now he has risen from the dead, trampling under foot death itself, the last enemy. *Christos aneste, ton thanaton patesas*, as the Greek Church sings in the mysterious night of the Easter Vigil.

Made like him, like him we rise;  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies!

(CHARLES WESLEY.)

## 2. *Aspects of Christology*

What we have presented thus far is an affirmation of our faith rather than an argumentative or apologetic discussion. We now turn more formally to certain aspects of christology which have a particular relevance to our understanding of the Church.

(a) Jesus is human, the Word is God, and yet in the incarnate life they are not two but one. The history of christology illustrates both the importance and the difficulty of doing justice to the two sides of this truth. Some modern discussions seem almost to read as if the authors were dealing with a problem of split personality. This is of course not the case. The presence of God in human life is a unifying and not a divisive factor, and supremely in the perfect man, in whom the divine Son was made like us in all things, sin only excepted. The line taken by Leo in his *Tome*, ascribing some of the works of Christ to his humanity and others to his divinity, was suspected of concealed Nestorianism, and in accepting the *Tome* as an orthodox statement the Church also gave similar recognition to

the balancing statements of Cyril of Alexandria. Certainly Christ did things which no other man did ; but his deity shines forth not only in the picture of the man who did divine things, but even more in the picture of his doing human things divinely.

Much modern Western theology has emphasized what is in technical terms the distinction of the natures at the expense of the unity of the person, which latter aspect tended to dominate technical christology in the Middle Ages. Many contemporary theologians have again found valuable contributions in the often neglected post-Chalcedonian period of ancient christology, in which the Cyrilline emphasis on the unity of God and man in Christ was further developed into the principle of *enhypostasia*, that the fullness of the humanity of Christ was achieved precisely in and because of his intimate unity with deity. The ancient Fathers usually found no difficulty in the idea, which our modern historical approach makes it hard for us to accept or even conceive, of divine omniscience in a human mind. On the other hand, emphasis on the unity of the person of Christ made it necessary to modify the philosophical presuppositions of divine impassibility, which Nestorian and even Leonine theology preserved by asserting that the sufferings belonged to his humanity alone. Orthodox theology first repudiated and then accepted the hesitant paradox of the Scythian monks of the time of Justinian, 'one of the Trinity suffered in the flesh.' With her Master, the Church is inescapably a citizen of two worlds.

(b) However it be phrased, the principle of the complete humanity of Jesus is to be preserved — including the presence in him of a human will sufficiently autonomous to be able to contemplate recalcitrance to the divine. The last of the ancient christological Councils (Third Constantinople, 681 A.D.) proclaimed this in what seems at first the startling doctrine of the 'two wills of Christ' — startling until one realizes that what is at stake is the fullness of his humanity (the same principle is indeed involved in the condemnation of iconoclasm in 787, when the Church insisted that the human Christ could legitimately be represented in human form). This was formally secured by the words recorded in Luke 22. 42, 'not my will, but thine, be done'; the act of submission requires one to admit that there was a real entity which could submit. And so one must also agree that there were real temptations, although in the Lord's case triumphantly overcome (Luke 22. 28). In him humanity makes a real response to God in faith and love ; and we who live in him become part of that response. And our life in him includes obedience to Jesus as human teacher, an aspect rightly stressed by the radical Reformers and modern liberals. He is certainly teacher as well as saviour, and expects his disciples to follow his teaching ; otherwise he properly reproaches us with the question, 'Why do you call me "Lord, Lord," and do not do what I tell you ?' (Luke 6. 46).

(c) The Word Incarnate is not separated from the Word Unincarnate, by whom creation is ordered and governed ; nor is he separated from the love of the Father and the power of the Spirit. The nature of God the Word is to be God in action, and so it is he who became man. The trinitarian basis of our christology asserts the unity of the Godhead as well as the genuine distinctions therein. The Father sent his Son to us in the power of the Spirit, whose presence in Jesus is exemplified rather than stated, except at a few crucial moments such as the baptism in Jordan. In him the gift which made men saints and prophets was present in its fullness, and through him the Spirit comes as a permanent source of grace to his followers, so that life in Christ is also life in the Spirit. There is no need to make

precise distinctions in the meaning of these two phrases, or between the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus. As one writer has put it, the Paraclete does not come to us to compensate for the absence of Christ but to accomplish his presence. Similarly, our experience of God as Father, Son, and Spirit enriches the unity of our life in faith rather than breaking it up into discrete elements.

### 3. *From Christology to Ecclesiology*

The relation of christology to our understanding of the Church is implicit in the whole of our report. But we summarize it here. The ancient people of God were so intimately related to their Lord that Israel can be called his child and his bride as well as his servant. Now transformed, as promised, into a universal fellowship, the Church continues to be the people of God, so closely united to him in Christ that it can be called his body. The great variety of images which the New Testament uses for the Church points in one way or another to its corporate and familial character. They also suggest the kind of relation which may be called analogical, or as some would prefer to say, sacramental<sup>1</sup>. It is not a relation of simple identity which would allow us to say without qualification that the Church is Christ — though one may venture to say in St. Augustine's phrase, based on Pauline thought, that the whole Christ, *totus Christus*, includes the human members as well as the divine and human Head.

There are similarities, though in each case with significant differences, between what we say about Christ and what we say about the Church. He is God and man; the Church is a human institution and also a divine reality. Here, as we know only too well, the sinfulness of the members contrasts with the perfection of the Head. There are differences in the interpretation of this contrast, which revolve largely around possible meanings of the stimulating but confusing phrase, *simul justus et peccator*. But these can be considered as various ways of describing the same facts. Some Christians would say that the Church as a whole is sinful and yet redeemed, and others that in so far as we sin we have ceased to be true members of the Church, which remains 'without spot or wrinkle or any such thing' (Eph. 5. 27). Part of this difference depends on whether we are confining our attention to that part of the Church now militant in earth, or include within our purview Christ himself and the saints departed. Our differences on these issues necessarily affect our conception of the authority of the Church, and raise the question whether it is proper to say that the Church itself, as distinguished from particular members or parts of the Church, is called on to re-form itself from age to age. But none of us would deny that we all need the great re-formation of human nature into the 'measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (Eph. 4. 13), and that this continues throughout our earthly life. As members of the Church we are incorporated into Christ, and at the same time continue to live our human lives in the particular concrete situations of human existence. The Church is a divine fellowship, and yet in its concrete expression can be studied as a visible institution subject to the stresses and pressures of the world. We have not been called away from the common life of man in the world, although in another sense we are indeed 'called out of the world'; and yet we believe that

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Minutes of the Commission on Faith and Order, 1960. *Faith and Order Paper* No 31, p. 25.

we are able by the Spirit to acknowledge Jesus as Lord (I Cor. 12. 3), and that we do in truth live in him and in the Spirit.

Our sacramental and trinitarian view of the Church is closely related to the particular sacramental ordinances of the Church. In this connection, it should be said that we have included in our thought the Quaker understanding of sacraments, as spiritual realities which can be experienced even apart from the external signs which are cherished in most parts of the Church. To us, as to the first disciples, Jesus is known in the breaking of bread (Luke 24. 35). The Lukan phrase suggests both the actual celebration of the Eucharist, the presence of the living Christ with us in the circumstances of daily life, and the participation at his table in the coming kingdom. As we receive his sacramental body he makes us more and more truly members of his mystical body; although the ancient Church would probably have reversed this phraseology, and would have said that as we receive the mystical symbols we become more and more genuinely members of the true body of Christ. As we remember his death we join in his life of sacrifice. As one of the members of our Commission, John Knox, has put it, the Church is 'the community which remembers Jesus'; and this is not to be taken in the external sense of thinking of someone who lived far away and long ago, but in the richest meaning of the biblical terms for recollection: the community's calling into active remembrance the deeds which God has done and promised to do, and God's making the deeds present to us.

In our sacramental union with Christ, the Spirit leads us to the Father. So it is fitting that the sign of our admission to the fellowship of the Church should be our baptism 'in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.' We have appreciated the opportunity of being able to combine our more general study of Christ and the Church with the specific study of Baptism which this Commission was directed to undertake. The meaning of the sacred rite is properly understood only when it is seen not primarily as either a gift to or an action of the individual recipient, but as an act of God in the whole process of the building-up of the body of Christ<sup>1</sup>. As we enter into life in him we are united with the triune God, and our understanding of christology and our understanding of the Church are both admirably represented by the trinitarian blessing which speaks of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 13. 14).

## B. The Church of Christ

In the preceding section we have centred our attention mainly on christology in the strict sense, including in this an interpretation of the event of Jesus Christ as word and work of the triune God. We have indicated our conviction that the event of Christ — the action of God in Christ — is both unique and universal; we have also made clear our belief that the Holy Spirit, empowering men in response to that event, is both uniquely related to Christ and universal in the range of his activity. And we have sought to bring Christ and the Spirit together in our thought under the rubric of the trinity of God. The Father creates the world by his Eternal Son through the operation of the Holy Spirit. The Father redeems that same world, fallen away from him in sin, by the same Eternal Son come among

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *One Lord, One Baptism*, SCM Press, Augsburg Publishing House, 1960, pp. 45 ff.

us in Jesus Christ and known in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Finally we have made some general remarks on the relationship of Christ and his Church.

We turn now to the implications of this christology and pneumatology for the doctrine of the Church. The various aspects of our agreement on this subject can be comprehended under two general headings: (1) The uniqueness of the Church; and (2) The Church as event and institution.

### 1. *The Uniqueness of the Church*

We are concerned at this point with the determination of the ways in which we may think of the Church as unique and as integral to the total work of God in history. This question leads immediately to the related question of the ways in which we must regard the Church as provisional or partial — a question which leads us to deal also with the relation of the Church to the rest of God's work. In one sense, of course, every community of men is unique; but the real issue for us has been to determine the special purpose and place which the Church has in relation to the over-all will and purpose of God for his world.

#### (a) *Israel of the New and Old Covenants*

In our Interim Report<sup>1</sup> we affirmed: 'The Church is not to be divorced from the Israel of God which was called together prior to the incarnation of the Word of God. The identity of the people of God, a historical movement having a particular and unique calling from God and responsibility to him, is common to both the Old and New Testaments. The Church has its distinct life because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The promise which was held before the Israel of the Old Covenant was fulfilled in Christ in such wise that the Israel of the New Covenant became the supra-national, universal people of God with the mission of proclaiming and embodying the reconciling work of God in Christ.'

That is the position from which we must start. In Christ something new has in fact appeared — namely the universal people of God with the mission to proclaim the universal Gospel of God. Yet it has a continuity with the Israel of the Old Covenant which can be denied only at the expense of de-historicizing the incarnate Lord and leading to another sort of Marcionism. This newness or uniqueness, in relation to the Israel of the Old Covenant, may be clarified by distinguishing between two modes or orders of newness: (1) a mode indicated by the term 'new humanity'; and (2) a mode of chronological novelty. This line of thought is more satisfactory than the familiar categories of continuity/discontinuity. The latter tend to obscure the distinctions we have just indicated, for in both modes ('new humanity' and 'chronological novelty') there is *both* continuity and discontinuity.

In respect to the first mode of newness it is necessary to speak of the properly unique — the radical newness of the Church. The contrast here established is between the new man and the old man, the new age and the old age, the time of salvation and the time of expectation. If the Church be indeed the body of Christ, the community of reconciliation, a new creation, the true circumcision, indwelt by the Spirit, as the New Testament describes it, then it must be defined as radically new. The basic contrast here is not one of chronology; old and new

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *One Lord, One Baptism*. SCM Press, Augsburg Publishing House, 1960, p. 14.

do not simply mean that one precedes and the other follows. On the contrary, time is here understood as a form of relation to God, in which there is (a) time fulfilled in salvation through Jesus Christ and (b) time of expectation in which, in relation to God, man can be seen as 'lost' through his alienation even in the moment when he awaits redemption in the new age which is to come. What is radically new, in this case, is the presence of eternity, the effectual reality of the structure of salvation which both negates and displaces the old.

But if this be true, then the newness of the Church cannot simply be identified with temporal novelty in relation to the Old Covenant, for the 'new' of which we speak is also contained in the life of Israel. The biblical witness is quite clear. The revelation of God was first of all to Israel. The Scriptures of the Church comprise the Old Testament, as well as its completion in the New Testament. The two Testaments belong together; and in both of them God is declared to be active among his people. The promise and the covenant were given to Israel. The Church participates in that promise and covenant through the fulfilment of the promises and the new establishment of the covenant in Jesus Christ. The redeeming incarnate Son of God was the Messiah of Israel, sent to Israel and representing and including in himself Israel as God's people. The Old Testament knows the reality of the Spirit, and Israel's life was shaped by visions of the outpouring of that Spirit in the Last Days. Though those days have begun, and therefore no exact parallel can be drawn between the relation of the Spirit to Israel and the relation of the Spirit to the Church, yet the Church also knows the Spirit as earnest of things to come. The inseparability of Christ and his Church has a clear parallel in the inseparability of Yahweh and his people. In this mode or order, therefore, the newness of the Church is a fulfilment, which also entails correction and transformation, accomplished in the person and work of Christ and the Spirit, of that which was previously known of the 'new' in Israel. On the other hand, the contrast of old and new is now decisively defined by the person and work of Christ<sup>1</sup>. But to say this brings us immediately to the second mode or order of newness, that of chronological novelty.

The radical newness which the Church affirms in respect to the presence and work of Christ and the Spirit finds a relative and parabolic expression in the chronological novelty of the Church. The time of the Church is chronologically a new time. The Messiah *has* come; the Word has become flesh at this time and not at some other time; the Spirit has been poured out in this moment. Here is *kairos*; but here also is a given and specific *chronos*. The Church is defined by this historically visible expression of the promised newness of life. The Son and the Spirit were indeed at work before this, but they are now present as Jesus Christ and his Spirit. Inasmuch as the old Israel was a preparation for Jesus, and since the Church looks to his coming again in glory, the Church does not merely succeed or follow the Israel of the Old Covenant; it continues that Israel. But inasmuch as the Church is defined by the historical events of incarnation, passion, resurrection, and Pentecost, it is novel and replaces the Israel of the Old Covenant. God's action in this new time is not simply the same as his action in the old time. Changes are real; the Spirit is present after Christ in a different mode from his presence before Christ (John 7. 39). It is the same triune God who is present in a new way, but the way in which he is present is a genuinely new way. History matters; genuine novelty must be reckoned with; things are not as they were.

<sup>1</sup> This definition of newness has relevance for the relation of the Church to the Jewish community, but we have not had opportunity to develop the implications of this.



Here there is a newness of displacement and fulfilment. The old is present in the new but is present in it *as surpassed*. The old Israel is succeeded but is not discarded or abolished (Rom. ch. 9-11). Its faith, hope and love are re-created, and its structures reshaped. The Old Testament is bound up with the New Testament in the Christian Bible.

(b) *The Church and the World*

Any discussion of the Church's uniqueness and universality involves a consideration of the Church's relation to the world. Yet such consideration requires a prior analysis of the ways in which the Church derives its uniqueness and universality from the uniquely universal work of God in Christ. It also requires an understanding of the radical newness of the re-creation in Christ. Whereas the world normally looks first at the Church for evidence of uniqueness, the Church looks first to its Lord, and then at the instrument through which he is working in history. When men find a dreadful discrepancy between the two, we of the Church must be the first to acknowledge in shame that this is indeed the case, while at the same time we insist that in all its imperfection and sin the Church which men see is yet that Lord's instrument and can only be understood in relation to him, his person, his work, his purpose, and his power. This is why we cannot speak of the Church in relation to the world without first speaking of Christ and his relation both to the world viewed as the totality of God's creation and to the 'world' viewed as hostile to God<sup>1</sup>.

The Lord of the Church not only is to be the Lord of the whole creation ; *he already is this*. To say that the Lord of the Church is the Lord of the whole world is an assertion which can be developed as follows : (1) The universal dominion of God over the world is the dominion of the same God who was in Jesus Christ, and whose work as the one triune God is indivisible. It is the one lordship of the one triune God which is exercised in Jesus Christ. It is the creative Word, 'through whom all things were made,' who became flesh in Jesus Christ the Lord of the Church. (2) The event of Jesus Christ established this lordship of God in a way new to the temporal and historical process. As in our thought about the Church, so here the fact of genuine novelty must be taken into account. God does new things (Isa. 48. 6). In the divine purpose for history, as in the divine action in history, the fulfilment of the exercise of God's dominion through the coming of Christ is a new thing. (3) The action of God in Jesus Christ, moreover, is directed to all humanity. The being of Jesus Christ is a sending and a giving for the whole world, that it may be saved through him. Christ takes to himself the humanity which belongs to all men, and in his living and dying he makes the suffering and the need of all mankind his own. In him the enemy has been defeated. In the decisive struggle in the wilderness, in the work of his ministry, and in the offering of himself on the Cross, the victory has been won over the evil world and for the whole world. (4) By his resurrection Christ is declared to be Lord of all. Not only are all things to be put under him, but this is already accomplished fact. The risen Christ freely and in sovereign right continues to work in the Church and in the world through his Spirit. Hence his victory is not only an event in the past,

<sup>1</sup> In this report, where the Commission places the term 'world' in quotation marks, it indicates this fallen world of sin and death, under the rule of Satan in New Testament language. Cf. 'The Lordship of Christ over the World and the Church', *Ecumenical Review* XI, July 1959.

chronologically over and done with ; it is an event in the present and in every moment of history. This is the glorious truth which to faith is made manifest on Easter Day and is the reality by which in hope we as Christians live in the world. (5) Jesus Christ is the one who is to come as judge and redeemer of all. He will be manifestly, even as he now already is, the fulfilment of God's purpose and the satisfaction of the deepest desires of mankind.

There is another consideration, obvious and yet often overlooked. As the incarnate Son was truly man, so is the Church wrought out of the stuff of human existence. The Church is shaped in and out of the realities of human historicity and sociality. Therefore the Church is not some 'ideal' community, existing in airy abstraction from the affairs of men. Neither is it 'spiritual' in the sense that it is to be contrasted with the hard and inevitable materialities of that world of history and sociality. To call the Church ideal or spiritual in those senses is to fall into ecclesiological docetism akin to the ancient heresy which denied to our Lord his physical body, his historical actuality, his immersion in the stuff of common life. We protest against every view of the Church which in a mistaken effort to exalt its nature as the body of Christ, succeeds only in making it 'purer' than its Lord.

In obedience to Christ and the Spirit, as the event of their presence and as properly patterned after Christ himself, the Church is necessarily *in*, as well as *with* and *for* the world. It stands in and with the world as testifying to an act of God's gracious calling, a decision and determination which apply not alone to the members of this community, but to the whole of humanity and to every individual within that whole. The Church stands in and with the world by its mission, by its taking the world to itself as the object of its love and concern, by identifying itself with the world as Christ identified himself with sinful humanity. It stands in and for the world as representing the whole of mankind in its praise, its thanksgiving, its confession, its petition, and also in its penitence and constant seeking for forgiveness. The Church's life before God is not a life for itself, but for the world. It is the representative human community directed explicitly toward the One who is the ground of all community, making manifest the lordship to which all are in fact subject, and living consciously toward the Truth and the Good which are the source and the goal of all truth and of all good, wherever they may be found and however they may be known.

In calling the Church to live in, with and for the world, Christ leads the Church into conflict with the 'world.' Since Christ and the Spirit are uniquely present in the Church, the Church is not dissolved into the world. It is not absorbed in the sinful world to which it is sent as mission, but is engaged in continual struggle with it in the fulfilment of its mission to redeem. Yet the Church does not preserve its self-identity by arrogant assertion of itself as over against the world, or by protective isolation from the world. It is most surely separate from the sinful world when it most fully embodies and most humbly expresses the Servant-form of the incarnate Lord, and becomes the Servant suffering for the world, bearing in its body the dying of Christ for men, and thus demonstrating in action its willingness to make the world's suffering its own. Conversely, the Church is most surely absorbed in the sinful world when it is afraid to spend its life for the world and seeks rather to save itself, when it becomes self-defensive and trusts in its own wisdom or strength, and when in spiritual pride it holds aloof from the world or in pride of power it seeks to control the world for its own ends.

The 'world' in fact invades the Church. The Church indeed participates in the fullness of victory and life which is in Christ ; it is indeed given the 'first-fruits' of the Spirit ; it has indeed already begun to live in the new age. But the final 'end' is not yet. The struggle for the right acknowledgement of the sovereignty of Christ is still waged within the Church itself. There is sin within the Church. Indeed, the Church is the realm in which evil can be, and is, most subtly at work. Here the combat with the powers of the old age must most decisively be carried on. This is the terrible tension in which the Church must live. So long as the world is the world and the Church is the Church, we cannot escape it. Therefore the Church lives in hope. Together with the whole creation it awaits and longs for the final word of God's gracious judgement in Christ. The glory of the Church is nowhere more clearly visible than in the repentance whereby it recognizes that it is not, in empirical fact, the reality which it ought to be, and which eschatologically it already is.

(c) *The Church as essential and provisional*

The tension described above raises two insistent questions : how can the empirical Church be so essential ? how can the Church as the new creation be so provisional ?

The Church confesses Christ to be the Lord of the whole world and the reconciler of the whole world to God. The attention of the Church is therefore always properly focussed upon him. The Church makes no claim to be itself Christ, nor does it offer itself as a substitute for him ; as his body it remains subordinate to him who is the Head. Yet it is his body, essential to his purposes in the ways in which he sees right and proper and hence possessing an essential nature which excludes views of the Church as merely incidental or accidental to God's workings in his world. In this sense the Church is part of the Gospel of God in Jesus Christ.

In saying this, we do not mean to assert that the work of Christ and his presence, the work and presence of the Spirit, are restricted to the Church. Such an assertion would be blasphemous. Neither in its own life nor outside the visible community can limits be set upon that presence and action. Indeed, if we are to judge by the pattern of the life of Christ and by the fruit of the Spirit which the Church knows and acknowledges, we must make more than such a negative statement. We must affirm the works of Christ and the Spirit outside the Church, in manifold expressions of mercy and reconciliation, in the various pursuits and discoveries of truth, in human creativity, and in countless other ways. Yet the Church is bound to claim all such works for Christ, for there is no other Lord than Christ, no other Spirit than the Holy Spirit.

This does not gainsay the truth that Christ is uniquely at work, by his Spirit, in and through the Church. Further, the Church is essential to all those other works of Christ and of the Spirit, for only in the Church do men hear the name of him who works true reconciliation and true mercy, because he is the truth of life and the consummation toward which all things move. Apart from knowledge of the name of Christ, apart from him as the source and norm, and apart from true destiny in Christ, these many works lack their true context. It is in the light of Christ's historical coming, made a continuing event, known in the worship of the Christian community of faith, that all these find their proper ordering, their right proportion, and are given their true name.

In sum, the Church is provisional because the world is in the Church, and therefore the Church must live by mercy and look also for cleansing. Yet the Church is essential because the mercy and the cleansing found within it are truly the mercy and cleansing for all men. The Church is provisional in that the Gospel itself is the good news of hope. The event of Christ and the Spirit points to a consummation which is not yet. The Spirit as the *arrabon*, the first-fruits, the 'earnest,' is not the end. The Spirit leads the Church to face forward to what God will do, even as he leads the Church to look backward to what God has done, and to look upward and inward and downward to what God even now is doing. Yet it is just in this that the Church is essential, because in the promise of the Spirit the assurance of the kingdom is given; and in the victory which has been won, in which the Church shares, the victory which is to come is both pre-figured and already present.

## 2. *The Church as Event and Institution*

We turn now to the implications of the trinitarian approach for the understanding of the Church as event and institution. The use of these two terms raises in particular the question of the way in which the working of the Spirit is to be understood. But this should not suggest that 'event' and 'institution' are related exclusively to the Spirit, for a common pattern of activity is to be seen in every aspect of the divine work. At every point, event and institution are to be found — whether as freedom and form, or variety and order, or dynamism and structure. When they are found, they are inseparably related one to another, interwoven and complementary.

The creative work of God includes a continuing creation of the new, which involves genuine novelty; yet this new, in its very novelty, is also an ordering. At all levels, from the microcosmic to the macrocosmic, we find the integration of novelty and continuity, fluidity and form. Unquestionably true in the order of nature, this is even more evident in human existence, with its unending dialectic of freedom and order.

As the act of God in human history, Jesus Christ is an event, the event of God's coming and of God's presence and action in the historic sequence. The event Jesus Christ displays the freedom of God in action, that entering of God into the historical process which always has the character of mystery and spontaneity and novelty. As event, Jesus Christ represents and embodies the sovereign freedom of God in his relation to the world which he has created. The event is inseparable from the whole story of God's saving work in the historical process, requiring for its portrayal the recounting of the whole drama of salvation which culminates in this event. This act in Jesus Christ is worked out in the whole career of this historical Person. Incarnation and Atonement constitute a story to be told as well as a structure to be describes. This is why it is appropriate to tell 'the old, old story,' to repeat the saga of 'that which God has done in Jesus Christ.' Thus at the same time, there is a structure, for this event like all events has its own particular given form, and no other form. In this instance of manhood God was signally declared; it was this humanity which was 'assumed,' as the ancient Fathers phrased it, and became the vehicle of the divine presence and the instrument of the divine energizing. In this particular living, dying, and rising again, the redemption of men was accomplished.

A similar dialectic of freedom and form characterizes the work of the Holy Spirit. It would be quite wrong simply to identify the work of the Spirit with spontaneity and freedom. Yet it would be equally wrong simply to identify the work of the Spirit with the established structures of, say, an ecclesiastical order. Both elements are present and must be preserved. Against those who think of structures as absolutized and utterly inflexible and who find the pattern and presence of Christ and the work of the Spirit wholly and without remainder given in the institution, the rebuke comes, 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom' (II Cor. 3. 17). For the Bible makes clear that while grace is indeed 'given' to the Church, it is never possessed by the Church in the sense of being controlled. The Church lives in the Spirit as the Spirit dwells in it, but the Spirit is God's Spirit and can never become identical with the human spirit nor with the corporate 'spirit' of the empirical Church. A special warning may be directed against drawing too close a parallel between *esprit de corps* and the Holy Spirit. Analogies and valuable intimations there may be ; but the lordship of the Spirit, who shares in the divine life of the triune God, must never be neglected.

Furthermore, the authority of the Spirit is never simply given over to the Church. It must not be taken for granted that in any given instance the pronouncements of an ecclesiastical dignitary, the views of some solemn assembly, the particular views of this or that agency, have the divine authority of the Spirit. The Spirit does operate within the community, and through the community's properly constituted agencies. But the Scriptures constantly warn us against the pretension to omniscience or absolute authority on the part of any person or group, even the Church in its empirical expression. The Scriptures also warn us against those who, claiming the Spirit's authority as an immediate possession, decry all institutional forms or channels.

The Spirit comes in judgement and blessing. We are warned that we must not grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4. 28), and are told that the Spirit will convince the world of sin (John 16. 8). But the dominant note in the New Testament witness to the Spirit is not judgement or even awe, but rather blessing and joy and power. The work of the Spirit is notably marked by richness and variety. Life in the Spirit is expressed in 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control' (Gal. 5. 22). The varieties of gifts of the Spirit include wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, the working of miracles, discrimination between spirits, tongues, interpretations of tongues (I Cor. 12). These varieties in the working of the Spirit are paralleled in the New Testament in many other ways : in the different statements of the *kerygma*, in the varying christological affirmations, and in the extraordinary number of different conceptions and forms of the Church shown in the rich variety of images which the New Testament contains.

How then does the Spirit work ? Not by replacing or coercing the human spirit, but by releasing and engaging the freedom of man's spirit. The guidance of the Spirit is not, so to say, additive to man's insight and understanding ; it is directive of that insight and understanding, by a gentle leading into the truth which is in Christ Jesus or by a catastrophic shattering of pretensions to knowledge by sinful men. To be 'filled with the Holy Spirit' does not mean that freedom is negated or that human spontaneity is destroyed ; it means rather that one is grasped by that obedience to God which leads to true freedom and spontaneity.

But when all this is said, it remains true that in his working the Spirit gives form. As in the Incarnation God binds himself to concrete manhood, so by the Spirit

in the Church he works in and through human flesh and blood, words and acts, social and historical structures. Any adequate view of the Church must give proper attention to such social and historical structures; and of this we shall speak below. For the moment we say only that the judgement of the Spirit on distorted, inordinate, pretentious forms is wrought, not by the total destruction of all forms, but by the creation of new forms more appropriate to God's intention.

Just as the Church is an activity and a life in which nature and mission are inseparable, and in which being and act are never to be set in opposition, so also the Church is inseparably both event and institution. By 'event' we mean here the dynamic energizing by Christ and the Spirit in the Church, the spontaneous quality of the human response, and the 'processive' character of the community's life in grace. By 'institution' we mean the established relationships and patterns of historic and social order, stable forms and definite structures.

The basic and originating conviction of Christian faith is that God has acted in Jesus Christ. And the basic reality of the Church is constituted by the event thus asserted: God in Christ acting through the Spirit, with the human response to that action. This means that the event, or Christ's action with the Holy Spirit's empowering response, is the *prius* of the Church. In any sacramental ordinance the event of Christ's act is prior to the ritual form which may be employed. In Scripture and in creed Christ as the living Word is prior to the words and constructions which speak of him. Christ's own ministering is prior to, and is the ground of, all general and all special institutions of ministry in the Church.

On the other hand, event is never without form. The structured expression of Christ's activity in the Church is not only required by man's historical and social condition. Above all, it is required by the definiteness of the Incarnation, by the enduring identity of the Spirit, and by the fact that in the response men make to Christ in the Spirit they are not extricated from their proper manhood but act in a truly embodied way. Furthermore, the continuity of the event, establishing the consistency of the fellowship of Christian faith, worship and life, can be maintained, and has been maintained, only in definite patterns. Similarly, the mission of the Church — its apostolicity or 'sentness' — necessitates now as always a structure of mission, a genuine apostolicity, which will guarantee and symbolize the abiding sentness which is integral to its nature.

From this recognition of both the place and the need for the institutional, coupled with the equal recognition of the freedom of the Spirit in and over the Church, three consequences may be drawn. (1) The 'eventful' nature of the presence of Christ and of the Spirit — that is, the freedom and variety to which we have referred — forbids the absolutizing of the *words* of Scripture, creeds, or confessions, or of any ritual forms, or of any ordering of ministry as exclusive or even indispensable agencies for the Lord's work. These structures cannot be regarded as simply perfect and unchangeable embodiments of the event which constitutes the Church; God cannot be 'bound' by such words, creeds, rites, and ministries. On the other hand, we should not so press this point that the Church becomes a community with no identifying structures possessing historical continuity. As we have frequently insisted, history does matter. Hence (2) the definiteness of Christ and of the Spirit requires concrete expression in the historical and social order. God's faithfulness to himself in the continuing work and presence of Christ and the Spirit must be reflected in whatever forms the life of the Church takes. Otherwise the pattern set by the Lord and by the Spirit

in whom response is made to him would not be reproduced (if this is the right word) in the Church of which he is the Head and of which the Spirit is the enforming power. There must be an ordering of word, sacrament, and ministry. The Church's institutions of proclamation, celebration, and the ordering of ministry are not accidental to its existence; neither are they incidental to any given phase of its history. The necessity of such institutions to the life and witness of the Church is not to be denied. These institutions identify the Church as the Church, although this identification is not absolute and exclusive. Christ acts to make them vehicles of his presence; the Spirit acts to make them instruments of his gracious work. (3) Finally, no easy boundaries, no neat delimitations, no ultimate disjunctions, can be established between the necessary freedom which marks the Church as 'event' and the necessary ordering which marks the Church as 'institution.' If we grant that there is to be diversity in the Church, we must reject that kind of diversity which would entail clear contradiction or mutual exclusiveness. It is precisely at this point that the issues of 'validity,' 'regularity,' and the like must be faced; but when they are to be discussed, the principles which we have sought to establish in this paragraph should be given the most careful attention.

Certain significant conclusions may be drawn from these principles. In stating them, we assimilate the discussion of word and sacrament to interpretation of ministry, in order to provide some guidance for dealing with the problems of unity in these areas of the Church's life.

(a) The basic ministry of the Church is Christ himself in his ministering, i.e. the risen Lord at work through, and even in spite of, his people. Similarly, the word proclaimed in the Church is fundamentally Christ's own self-testimony, his communication of himself to those whom he has been pleased to call his brethren. And the *mysteria* or sacraments of the Church are all grounded in and transcended by the *mysterion*, the hidden yet revealed working of God in the Incarnation, the victory on the Cross, the Resurrection, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the advent yet to come.

(b) This ministry of Christ, basic to all ministering, to all proclamation, to all worship, is reflected in the first place in the corporate ministry of and through Christ's body which is the Church. All in the Church are ministers in that they participate by grace through the gift of the Holy Spirit in the originative and determinative ministry of Christ; and the whole life of the Church is itself a ministry marked by many varieties of ministering. Likewise, the Word which is Christ is uttered in the whole life of testimony and faith, of adoration and proclamation, of serving and suffering, which is characteristic of the Church in its words and in its actions. And the *mysterion* is expressed in the liturgy of praise, confession, sacrifice, and intercession which is the visible and audible manifestation of the hidden life of the Church.

(c) In order to fulfill this total ministry, there are special ministries in the Church. These are both representative of the corporate ministry of the whole body and also gifts to the Church whereby the corporate ministry is ordered. They are related historically and concretely to Christ's own ordering of his earthly ministry and to the Holy Spirit's evocation and gift of the ordering of the apostolic community. Special ministries are indispensable as a sign and focus for the whole ministry of the whole body. They are an essential organ of ministry in that they provide a structured expression of the ministry which Christ exercises continually in and through the whole Church. They are to be justified and controlled by

their congruity with the pattern of our Lord's own historical ministering. In the same way, the Word as Scripture (and derivatively as creed) is an essential concretizing of the *kerygma*. Here is the verbal representation of the act of God in Jesus Christ, taking the shape of an authoritative tradition which provides the focus for proclamation and belief, and which (because of the immediacy of its relation to the historical event of Jesus Christ) is the means by which the true Word is heard in the Church. And the *mysteria*, or sacraments, of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are dramatic epitomes of all the acts of the Church whereby the grace of Christ is expressed and given. They are central to these acts of the Church by virtue of their being rooted in the history of Jesus; they are criteria of the Church's faithfulness to the Gospel of crucifixion and resurrection; and they are gifts through which the Church participates in the events which are the source of the Gospel and the energizing power of the Christian life.

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We have sought to understand the reality of the Church in a different way from that suggested in most conventional statements. This is not because we would reject these definitions out of hand, but because we believe that a fresh approach may help to put the questions of Christian unity in a new light and thus facilitate discussion of the problems which our present disunity raises.

We have been talking about the unity of the Church, the catholicity, the apostolicity, and the holiness which characterize it because of the working of the Holy Spirit in it. In our discussion of ministry, for example, we have been grappling with the very problems that were discussed at the time of the Reformation and afterward in the western Church, as well as in the days of St. Augustine in his struggle with the Donatists. We have been considering the questions which have sometimes been treated in terms of 'visible' and 'invisible' Church; we have been insisting on the priestly nature of the body of Christ under its High Priest who is the Head of the Church; and we have been concerned with the place of the sacraments in the life of the Christian community.

It is our belief that the particular way in which we have proceeded goes behind many of the terminological disputes, differences of phraseology, and traditionally hallowed definitions, to issues even more basic than these, yet to which all of these point and with which, in their own way, they are always dealing. In our own experience, we have discovered in this fashion a remarkable unity, and even where we continued to differ, we have yet achieved a new measure of understanding, sympathy, and mutual recognition of positions held by our several communions. And it is our conviction that the churches to which we belong will find such an attempt illuminating and helpful in their common effort to deal with the underlying realities of the life of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ our Lord.

### C. The Church in the World

In the preceding parts of this report, we have discussed the person and work of Jesus Christ, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, and the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, building upon the biblical witness to the mystery of God through the revelation which he has made in his Son and through the Spirit. We have discussed the nature of the Church, always attempting to use the 'pattern'



of revelation given in Scripture as the basis for our analysis. In conclusion, it is appropriate to offer some further observations on the life of the Church in the world and some implications of that life for the unity and mission of the Church.

From earliest days Christians have seen the world as the creation of the triune God. This affirmation of faith goes deeper than changing world-views and scientific theories concerning the origin and development of the world. The world is much more than a stage provided for man's living and an object of his rational inquiry. It is the expression of God's infinite power and love, the vast sphere of God's glory, in a small part of which he has placed mankind to dwell. The world is not morally neutral. God, who alone is perfectly good, created a good world: that is, a world capable of being used for his glory both by himself and by the one living creature, known to us, who has been made in his own image. God's glory is the achieving of his eternal purpose for the whole creation, the bringing of all things into subjection to his perfect will, through man's freedom, faith, and responsibility, and by the free working of God's Spirit.

In the creating and the sustaining of the world, the creative Word of God — God in his self-expressive hypostasis — is the agency 'through whom all things are made.' So also the salvation of the world — its being brought to its intended wholeness — is achieved by the creative Word. And by the operation of the Holy Spirit, creation is conformed to its purposed fulfilment. The world is indeed the creation of the triune God, for the distinctions to which we have just referred do not negate the indivisibility of the works of God *ad extra*.

The historic appearance and the work of Jesus Christ must be viewed against the background of the good creation and the Creator's purpose of good. So also the Church must be understood in respect to the creation and not only in respect to man's redemption. God loves the world which he made and makes to such a degree that he accomplished in it and for it his stupendous work, the incarnation of his Son. Some Christians maintain that the Incarnation belongs to the predestined order of things — to wit, that God would have acted thus, even had man not sinned, for only so could he fulfill his purpose in creation. Yet all agree that as a matter of fact the Incarnation is God's answer to the ravaging evil in the world and the whole weight of man's sin. The corruption of the good creation as well as the infidelity and treachery of man provide the occasion for God's answer. Hence they provide the setting within which we may know the depths of the divine love, through Jesus Christ, which otherwise could not have been known. *O felix culpa quae talem et tantum meruit habere redemptorem!*

It is only as creatures who belong to the world that we know God as Father, Jesus Christ as Lord, and the Holy Spirit as empowerer. Along with countless men of diverse beliefs or of no beliefs, the Christian community participates in civilizations which increasingly transform the undisturbed earth into a dwelling for men. It cannot extricate itself from the complex array of human relations and institutions, nor from man's inevitable dependence upon the natural order and human society. Nor should it attempt to do so. It is pointless for Christians to worry about how they might 'identify themselves' with all their fellowmen and with the world, for thus to be identified is inescapable and is in fact what it means to be human. Jesus Christ our Lord showed his full and true humanity precisely by identifying himself in all points with us men and with the world, even to the point of accepting our mortality. In this he manifested the abiding love of God for the world. And in this he provides the Church with the pattern for its life.

Jesus Christ comes into the world to save the world. The Church is to express the divine glory and it does so supremely as participant in the salvation of the world. This participation is enabled by Christ's presence in the Holy Spirit. It is as vain to think of the Church on earth without its vocation and life in the world as to conceive of the Church without the indwelling life of Christ. He lives in the Church for the sake of the world which never fails to need him, although it may ignore or even hate him. Christ is thus present in order to draw men out of their worldly estrangement into a life of grace. He is present to bring them from selfishness to communal love, to establish among them discipline and worship, to give them an existence based on faith and fulfilled in charity. When we seek to know how and why the Church exists, we need only to reflect on the purpose of Jesus Christ's own life and its consequences for the lives of all men.

The Church is that community of faithful people wherein and whereby the everliving Christ continues his work of salvation in every generation. And the task of the Church consists precisely in self-forgetful obedience to him. Such obedience takes a variety of forms, according to his acts, gifts, and commands. For example, the Church proclaims for the world the Gospel of God's present and coming Reign. It mediates the grace of God for the forgiveness of sinners and for their restoration to true health and wholeness of life in God. It accepts and employs the gift and disciplines of corporate and personal prayer, both for the world and itself. It declares God's holy and righteous commandments and warns both its own members and the world of the perils of disobedience. It is moved by the constraining love of God to love of the brethren and love for the world. In brief, it is the community where the redemptive, reconciling self-offering of Jesus Christ is continually appropriated by faith within the lives of its members and in their relations with all people in all the world.

The Lord again and again recalls his Church to this life for the world. He rebukes the Church for every obstacle placed in the way of his mission. Our divisions, for example, are the negation of that mission. Differences within a subsuming unity or valid diversities may contribute to the health of the body. But real fractures of the Christian community represent a force of evil which militates against the saving purpose of God. All Christians are therefore under obligation to serve as peacemakers and reconcilers.

This applies not only to the familiar divisions of churches because of conflicts over matters of faith and order. Churches are also divided by distinctions of social and economic class, by moral conventions, by cultural legacies, by national loyalties, and by racial discrimination or caste exclusiveness. All division in the Church, Christ's chosen instrument of reconciliation and redemption, is evidence that secular attitudes, open or concealed, have been allowed to deflect it from its true mission.

On the other hand, even if all the present and potential plans for church union were realized, this unity would still be only a contribution, albeit essential, to the Church's fulfilment of its task in the world. Moreover, a concern for unity which is not inspired and informed by an active zeal for mission is misconceived. Both unity and mission are ultimately God's gifts and his mandates to his Church, in order that he may use the Church for the divine purpose. Both in his earthly life and by the directing of his Holy Spirit in history, Christ has shown us the basic lines along which the Church must pursue his mission of reconciliation in the world.

In all relations between the Church and the world we must bear in mind, as noted above, Christ's identification with the empirical world. That identification implies that the Church and its members are expected to take their place in the world; to live responsibly and gladly in the world which is God's good creation even though defaced and corrupted by sin; to share the life of God's creatures in their joys and sorrows, their acts of creativity and their inability or refusal to live creatively; to bear witness in many quiet and unspectacular ways to him who is Lord and Servant of, in, and for, the world.

Finally, we confess that life in the Church can be faithful and true only as it is life empowered and directed by Jesus Christ, through the Spirit, and only as it is clearly related to his saving work. The three activities, to which we have insistently drawn attention — confessing and proclaiming the faith, worshipping God in the unity of fellowship and faith, and serving the world — constitute the liturgy or reasonable service of the Church. To divorce any one of these three from the other two, and to allow that one to become ostensibly the fullness of the Church's work, would do violence to the wholeness of the revealed purpose of God for the Church. On the other hand, when there is wholehearted participation of Christian people in this complete liturgy, there the person and the power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are shown forth in the Church to the world, and the redemption goes forward towards its appointed consummation, when the distinction between Church and world will have been overcome, to the glory of God the Father (I Cor. 15. 28).

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## PART II

### REPORT OF THE THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION ON CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

(European Section)

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## FOREWORD

*Christ and the Church* : this title accorded to our Commission has determined alike the object of its study and theme of its report. While its members have not been unmindful of their respective traditions, the dominant concern of our Section has been *Christ and the Church*, rather than *Christ and the Churches*. An attempt has been made to work out the implications of our common confession of the one Christ and one Church in the fellowship of the one Spirit into which we have been baptized.

To study the Church in the light of Christ is to gain a perspective in which the hard realities of the churches appear less harsh and the fundamental elements of the doctrine of the Church assume a fresh aspect. Such we discovered for ourselves, particularly in the production of the report issued by the joint meeting of the American and European branches of the Commission and entitled *One Lord, One Baptism* (SCM Press, Augsburg Publishing House, 1960). An endeavour was there made to view baptism in the light of the christological significance which it seems to possess in the New Testament. The result was instructive : in cutting behind the traditional confessional issues to the christological emphases associated with baptism in the New Testament we found an unexpected measure of agreement among the members of the Commission. If we did not solve all difficulties (some of the acutest in the life of the churches were hardly considered), a mode of approach to baptism had yet emerged which merited further exploration by the churches.

This encouraged the extension of the method to other areas of the doctrine of the Church. In particular it suggested the desirability of setting the highly controverted doctrine of the ministry in this perspective. Naturally this report is concerned chiefly to set forth the importance of Christ and the Spirit for the understanding of the Church itself, and it would be illegitimate to concentrate on one aspect to the detriment of the rest ; it is hoped, however, that an indication may be found here of the fresh light that may be expected when the problems of the ministry are related to the ministry of the Lord who is the life of the Church and the Spirit who mediates that life to it.

The members of the Commission are aware that the path it has taken is but one among several possibilities, and therefore in some respects its report may appear to have the character of a study document rather than that of an agreed statement. Certain of our number have reservations as to the adequacy of the method adopted and would have preferred a different one. Nevertheless that which we have taken has commended itself to the majority as basically sound, and all, including those who have expressed doubts as to its being the most appropriate method, acknowledge the usefulness of presenting it to the Montreal Conference and the general reader. That some tensions remain unresolved is a reminder of the context in which the work of the Faith and Order Commission is performed and how much remains to be done in preparation for that unity of the churches which all our discussions subserve.

## INTRODUCTION

The Church does not exist by and for itself. It is grounded in the eternal purpose of the Father to send his Son Jesus Christ into the world, the Head and Saviour of all things. It cannot therefore be known or interpreted out of itself, but from the eternal love of God who has not willed to live alone, but created beings distinct from himself that he might share with them his divine life and glory and as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, dwell among them. It is the calling of the Church to be an instrument of this divine will, and to be the firstfruits of this new creation.

Since its existence derives from the saving mission of the Eternal Son, the Church lives in history as the Servant of Christ, proclaiming the gospel to the whole world. It is its mission to bring to men of all nations, races and classes a message of hope, setting over and against every dark and dangerous hour the love of God in Jesus Christ which breaks down all barriers, transcends all divisions and calls men into one universal flock under the one great Shepherd. In the divine economy the Church did not come into being all at once with the creation of human society. It was formed in history as God called his people into being and entered into communion with them, working out his purpose by those mighty acts which he brought to fulfilment in Jesus Christ. It is in the light of his saving work that the history of the Old Covenant is seen to have been the necessary pre-history of the people of the New Covenant, the Christian Community.

## I. THE PEOPLE OF GOD UNDER THE OLD COVENANT

God allied himself in a Covenant of grace with his creatures, committing himself to them in fatherly goodness, and not giving them up, despite their sin. From generation to generation he revealed himself to them as they were able to apprehend him. Although his purpose embraced the whole race, he chose one people from among others to mediate his revelation, and to be the sphere of his redemptive acts. When God called Abraham and promised him 'I will be a God to you and to your seed after you' he began to separate them in this way from other nations and to make them an instrument through which all nations, and indeed the whole creation, should be blessed.

With the redemption of Israel from bondage in Egypt and its establishment as a holy people at Sinai, Israel emerged as the Ecclesia or church of God. For even in its Sinaitic form the Covenant was essentially one of grace. God knew that his people would be unable to keep their side of the Covenant, and so in faithfulness and mercy provided within it a way of response to his loving kindness, a means of reconciliation to fellowship with himself. The chosen people, therefore, were provided with a Law which set forth the divine will, and an order of worship and sacrifice which supplied them with a covenanted way of response to his will. Both of these were a testimony to the fact that mercy and judgment belonged to God alone, and enshrined the promise of messianic salvation. In this manner Israel came to be God's prophet among the peoples, his servant entrusted with the oracles and promises of God. While its ordinances were temporary, belonging to a preparatory economy, these promises and oracles point forward through the history of Israel to their fulfilment in a Messiah and a messianic Kingdom, that is, to the Incarnation of the Word, and a redemption which would embrace all races and nations in a new Covenant, through the Spirit, one universal people of God.

When the Christian Church referred to itself as Ecclesia, it claimed continuity with the *Qahal*, the people of God under the Old Covenant, but in so doing it clearly regarded that people, before the Incarnation, as the Church, albeit in preparatory form. Only with the atonement between God and man in Jesus Christ could the people of God find its final, permanent form in the Body of Christ — that Body which was given its new birth in the Resurrection, and made universal at Pentecost. None the less, there is a parallel and a continuity between the movement of God's grace in Israel, and his relation to the Christian Church, which is built not only on the foundation of the apostles, but on the prophets also.

Israel was a chosen people, elect not only for its own sake, but set apart for a vicarious mission, called into being by the Word of God and constituted through union and communion with him. There is a distinction to be observed between Israel 'after the flesh,' the historical entity of the Jewish nation, and Israel 'after the spirit' — the people called out of, and responding to, the promises of God. We may not simply equate these two, nor too sharply dissociate them. The Bible shows God at work through the whole history of Israel, but within this history there is a concentration and a narrowing down. This is shown in the great conception of the Servant of the Lord. The election of Israel was the calling of men in their sinful existence, in their enmity to God, and therefore it involved judgment. In their very rejection of the divine will, they acted in a representative capacity for all peoples. What was needed was a Servant of the Lord who should fulfil in his own body and soul the covenanted obedience of God's people. The narrowing

down from the wider community finds its fulfilment in the one person of the Messiah, in the Incarnation, in one coming out of Israel, who should act as mediator, through whose rejection in suffering and sacrifice, redemption would be achieved for all men, including Israel itself.

In the fulness of time, the Messiah came. John the Baptist came as messenger of the Covenant to prepare the way. He stood on the boundary between the Old Testament and the New, proclaiming that the messianic kingdom was at hand, and that the promises to Abraham were about to be fulfilled. Through baptism for repentance unto the remission of sins there was made ready a people for the Lord. When Jesus submitted to John's baptism he identified himself with the sinful people of God that he might make their sin his own, and enable them to share his righteousness<sup>1</sup>.

## II. JESUS CHRIST AND THE MESSIANIC COMMUNITY

With the advent of Jesus the Kingdom of God, prophesied and longed for over many centuries, had arrived and was active among men. God's Kingdom and God's people belong essentially together. At his baptism Jesus was consecrated both Messiah and righteous Servant. Within himself he embodied both the people and the Kingdom of God. As the anointed Servant he came to uphold and serve his people, giving his life for them. They in turn were a messianic people as they inherited in him, shared his anointing, followed him, partook of his redemption. In Christ's temptations in the wilderness following his baptism (as in Gethsemane and at Golgotha at the end of his ministry) the nature of evil and men's bondage to it is made plain. Men had come to think of deliverance as something to be achieved through a shift in the balance of earthly power. The disciples themselves seem to have looked for a Messiah who would establish his rule politically over the kingdoms of the earth. The Tempter brought his attack to bear on Jesus at this point with subtlety, but failed.

Precisely here did the Son of God make plain that he would fulfil his mission, not by acts of dazzling majesty or compelling power, but as the Servant of the Lord, in obedience to him, ranging himself with sinners in their weakness, under judgment. He himself, tempted yet without sin, advanced inexorably from Baptism to the Cross, to carry out the mighty deeds of our redemption. Thus the Church of the new Covenant grew out of the indivisible union between the Messiah and the people of God. Its character and the nature of its mission were determined by the way in which he lived his divine life, the way in which he performed his ministry on their behalf.

This, then, is the context within which in the Scriptures Jesus Christ and the messianic community are presented to us. The Kingdom and the people of God are concentrated in him, and the life and mission of the Church, as the people of the new Covenant, are rooted in the sending of the Son by the Father. It was his person, and the character of his ministry, which determined the ministry of the messianic people.

<sup>1</sup> It is greatly to be desired that a group be appointed to study the complex and highly debatable questions bound up with the Church's relation to Israel: e.g. the relation of Israel as the covenant people of God to the Church of the New Covenant, considered both historically and theologically; the role of Israel as a nation in the time of the Church; Israel and the eschatological hope of the Church; Israel and the unity of the Church; Israel after the flesh, and Israel after the spirit.

From the beginning of his public ministry Jesus set out to restore the people of God, by gathering followers or disciples round himself, as the nucleus of the messianic community in which the Kingdom of God was actively at work. This messianic office he fulfilled in his own ministry : preaching the good tidings of the Kingdom, summoning men to repentance, seeking and saving the lost, healing the sick, forgiving sins, teaching all who had ears to hear, transforming their lives and communicating to them the new righteousness, instituting in their midst the final law of God, and building them into a community with its authoritative centre in himself. The historical ministry of Jesus, his teaching and praying, his own life and obedience, the miracles and parables, are an integral part of his atonement. He did nothing of himself, but acted only in accordance with the will of the Father who sent him, and therefore resorted to prayer before all the major acts of his ministry. It was by this divine authority that he founded the new Israel and inaugurated the new Covenant.

He laid the basis for the new Israel when out of those he had called to be his disciples he chose twelve to be with him as the nucleus of his Church, a company which would find its centre of unity in him. These he initiated into his messianic secret, sending them out to exercise his ministry of preaching and healing, promising them that they should be baptized with his baptism and drink the cup which he was to drink. Thus the little flock went up to Jerusalem with him, and shared in the Last Supper where Jesus inaugurated the new Covenant in his body and blood.

The Messiah was rejected and crucified, the disciples were scattered, the temple was destroyed, and the axe laid to the root of Israel. In the final hour, he was left alone on the Cross, the one dying for the many. But in his death the many who inhered in him died too — and the whole company of sinners into which he incorporated himself when he made their guilt and judgment his own. He died that through his death he might destroy the whole body of sin, redeem men from the power of guilt and death, and through his resurrection raise them up as the new race, a new humanity, the universal people of God, joining Gentiles and Jews in the commonwealth of the new Israel. The death and resurrection of the Messiah brought the old economy in God's household to an end and ushered in a new, through union with himself in his risen body. Jesus had already gathered the nucleus of the church, but now he cleansed it and changed it through the mystery of union with himself in his death and resurrection. He had prepared it for this hour and now he reconstituted it and recommissioned it. Through the Spirit it could participate in him, by reason of his atoning work, and was finally established as the Church of God.

The Church does not exist by itself or have an independent life of its own. It is the Body of Christ and exists because of its own organic relation to its Lord through his death and resurrection. There is but one Christ who is both the Head and the Body. It is a Church born of the Spirit, filled and directed by the Spirit that it may be conditioned in all its life by the being and mission of Jesus Christ.

The relation between Jesus and the messianic community which he gathered round himself during his ministry continued to be normative for the life of the Church after the resurrection. Jesus and his disciples had shared in one messianic mission, but his role in it was unique. His place in the one community was as Mediator, Head and King, theirs as members and servants. The redemptive work was his alone. This likeness and difference between Jesus and his disciples

is the fundamental pattern for the life and ministry of the Christian Church in the world, as it comes to view after the resurrection, and after Pentecost. 'As the Father hath sent me, so send I you.' The apostles had been trained through intimate association with Jesus: they had been told the secret of his mission: they had been personally instructed that they might be the commissioned and authoritative witnesses to Christ. They were not intended by Jesus to pass on what they had received in precisely the same way in which they had received it — they had now to bear witness to him in the light of his death and resurrection. Their task was to gather up and pass on the self-revelation of Jesus in his words, in his presence and acts. This is the essential difference between Jesus, the unique Son of God, the only Saviour and Mediator, and those he came to save. The importance of the apostles is that they were the chosen and trained instruments endowed with the Spirit to pass on the self-witness of Jesus, as it was translated into witness to him by men in history, for men in history. This took place under the power of the Spirit and is embodied once for all in the writings of the New Testament which has ever since been the means of Christ's self-revelation to men. The apostles cannot be separated from what they passed on, or what they passed on from their function in passing it on. It is plain, therefore, that the power and authority of the apostles do not lie in themselves, but in the self-witness of Christ which operates in the apostolic witness to him as Saviour and Lord.

What is true of witness is true of ministry. There is a parallel between the ministry of the apostles and the ministry of Jesus. The apostles were commissioned to lay once and for all the foundations of the Church in the life and ministry of Christ. The ministry of the apostles was a ministry in the gospel of Christ, crucified and risen. Thus the ministry of the Church is both like and unlike the the ministry of the historical Jesus. It is rooted in it, patterned after it, and in a real sense shares in it. But it is different from his, for it is a ministry of redeemed sinners proclaiming salvation through Christ, whereas his ministry is that of the one Redeemer and Saviour. Because he is the one Mediator and Saviour he is in the absolute sense the only Minister of the Church before God, the one anointed (*Christos*) for this office, the one endowed with all authority in heaven and earth (including authority to judge the Church), the one who at the end will hand over everything to the Father.

### III. THE SENDING OF THE SPIRIT AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

In his birth, life, death and resurrection Jesus Christ finished the work the Father gave him to do. He, the Eternal Son, by whom all things were made and in whom all things cohere, became a man among men, incorporating into himself the humanity which had alienated itself from God through sin. In taking it and there living out his holy life, he condemned sin in the flesh, saving what he had assumed, sanctifying the mother through whom he was born, the sinners with whom he identified himself and to whom he communicated his grace, and the company of men and women which he had built around him as his own body. He loved them and gave himself for them, and in them for all mankind.

In solidarity with us he offered himself to the Father, and in so offering presented us also to the Father, he the obedient for us the disobedient, that he might destroy sin and death in us, and raise us up in himself in newness of life, presenting us as brothers whom he has redeemed and therefore as children of the

Father. In his resurrection and ascension Jesus Christ was installed with power at the right hand of God. As Head of the Church and Lord of all things he rules from on high, living as our Mediator and Advocate and through the blessing of the Spirit poured on men, sends his healing and creating Word for the reconciliation and regeneration of all mankind. He is the new Man, the new Adam. Through him, by the Spirit, the Church is made to live as his Body on earth, and is empowered in apostolic mission to represent him among men.

There was therefore a twofold sending: of the Spirit of God, and of the apostles. The Holy Spirit is sent from God to speak of Christ, who has a unique relation with the Son. He is sent to reveal the Son. In the Fourth Gospel he is spoken of as *paracletos* — Advocate, whose coming would support and assist the apostles, to teach them all things, and bring all thing to their remembrance, maintaining them that they might not be left in their discipleship without divine aid and care. By him the relation between the Father and the Son was projected between the apostles and Christ himself. ‘As the Father hath sent me, so send I you.’ When the Father sent the Son, the Father himself was at work in his ministry, and when Christ sent the apostles he was present in their ministry. Thus the ministry of the apostolic Church is Christ’s own personal ministry.

As Christ did not act instead of the Father, but the Holy Trinity was present and acted in him, so the apostolic Church does not act instead of Christ. Though he is distinct from it, he acts through and in its ministry, by his grace making it his own. Thus the Church comes into being and is maintained in every age by the Word and the Spirit.

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out in fulness, when the atoning work of Christ was complete. The divine life embodied in him was released, and the Kingdom of Heaven opened to all believers. What took place in Jesus Christ, intensively, within the limits of one particular life and influence, now began to take place extensively, moving out to all men. The Church in history obeys this catholic movement of the Spirit, and reflects it in its own life. It restores broken and scattered humanity within the one people of God, bringing them into unity with Christ. It is the antithesis of Babel, which was the division and confounding of a people gathered to glorify their own name. In the Church at Pentecost the ancient prophecies of the restoration of God’s people are fulfilled, as they call upon the Name of God and are saved.

### **A. The Church as Communion in the Spirit**

The communion of the Church is in Christ through the Holy Spirit, and therefore much more than a spiritual communion, or a communion of spirits. It corresponds to the union between God and man in the incarnation. There are two unions, one which Christ established in his incarnation and another which we have with him through the Spirit. There is one union which Christ has created between himself and us, in which we share through the Spirit which is his gift to us. The Church can thus be spoken of as the corporate union we have with Christ through the communion of the Spirit. Inasmuch as the Spirit is sent in the name of Christ, he operates where that name is heard and where people gather in that name, that is, wherever the gospel is preached. There the Church founded by Christ upon himself as the new people of God continues to arise. It is through this relation in the Spirit that union with Christ is realized within the conditions of human life.

There is thus a union between Christ and the Church as a whole. The Church is the place within human society where the gospel is preached and believed, where the union between God and man has created a corresponding fellowship between man and man. Christ binds this Church corporately to himself.

But there is also a union between Christ and each individual believer. The Son of God became flesh in one particular man. In the new economy God and men are related through this one man, Jesus. The Spirit operates in and through encounter between this particular man and every man. The gospel is the means of this personal encounter. To the Word God has joined the mission of the Spirit that in it men may hear not only the words of men, but the Living God whose words are spirit and life. This is the Word which comes as a two-edged sword, uncovering the thoughts and intents of his inmost being, facing him with ultimate decision. In this encounter each man may share in the faith and obedience of Christ and himself live a life of faith and obedience in him.

Christ therefore encounters men in a twofold way, within the community of believers and within the life of each man. It is in solidarity that the gospel is communicated and received, so that private and corporate communion belong inseparably together within the Church. This is a common sharing in Christ and his grace. In this way we think of the Church as a communion of saints, as each shares with the other the life and love of God. In this communion none lives for himself alone, none believes or worships entirely alone, for he belongs to his brother for whom Christ died, and has no relation with Christ except Christ's relation which is with all for whom he died.

## **B. The Church as the Community of the New Covenant**

The fatherly will of God for communion with man, expressed in the old Covenant was accomplished in incarnation, reconciliation and the gift of the Spirit. This is the new Covenant which God had declared through the prophets, to be inscribed on men's hearts by the Spirit. Now under his illumination the minds and hearts of believers were opened to the word of God. The Church, built round the twelve disciples, knew itself to be the people of the new Covenant, for its whole substance is Jesus Christ, and the whole life and faith of the people of God under this new Covenant are to be understood in him.

The Church of the new Covenant is the community of those who find life beyond themselves in Christ. Just as the Apostle could say 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal. 2. 20) — so by the same Spirit the Church finds its life not in itself but in Christ on the ground of what he has done for it, who reigns over it as its sole Head and Lord.

But the Church of the new Covenant is also the community of those in whose hearts Christ dwells by faith. It is the temple of the Holy Spirit, where the Word is proclaimed and where he is to be met, worshipped and adored. Christ in his mercy dwells in his Church in spite of its errors and disobedience, making it live, sanctifying it, enabling it to share in the perfection and unity of the Holy Trinity.

This twofold relation, the Church in Christ and Christ in the Church, is given and maintained through Baptism and Holy Communion. Baptism is the sacrament of the Church's incorporation, once and for all, in Christ and marks out



in the world the covenanted mercies of God, by which all who believe in the gospel may find in Jesus Christ their Saviour and Lord and are pledged to live not to themselves but to him. In Holy Communion the Church continually feeds upon Christ until he comes again, receives his indwelling presence, is renewed as his Body, is lifted up to join the communion of saints in heaven and on earth in eucharistic oblation, adoration and praise. Baptism also marks the frontier of the Church as it faces the world in witness to Christ, in its renunciation of all evil, while Holy Communion marks the inner frontier, the presence of the Lord as it partakes of the mysteries of God. Through both sacraments the Church is continually renewed, the Body of which its Lord is the Head, from which he will not be separated, since Head and Body make one whole Christ.

### C. The Church and the Kingdom of Christ

Jesus Christ rules over the Church by word and Spirit. He is king over all nations and all ages. The Church manifests the Kingdom of Christ and is the instrument which he uses to extend his Kingdom to the ends of the earth, until the end of time. This union with Christ enthroned as King of the universe and Ruler of history gives the Church its teleology.

What has been fulfilled within the Church by the Spirit is to be extended to all mankind, and reach the whole creation. The Church is the new humanity in the world, the firstfruits of the new creation within the old.

Thus by an inner compulsion of the Spirit the Church turns towards all those for whom Christ died, that they may be gathered into the one household of God. The Church cannot live for itself but is impelled by the Spirit to find its fulness in the whole creation. Thus the frontiers of the Church are open towards all men, away from all self-absorption or selfish introversion, in loving service towards all mankind, and in recognition that nothing in heaven and earth can be excepted from the divine reconciliation accomplished in Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, the Church through this same Spirit finds itself in tension with the world, with which it stands in solidarity, in judgment and in grace. In this world the word of God is resisted, and the Spirit of God convicts it of sin, righteousness and judgment. Sharing in the new humanity of Christ the Church condemns the world, for it proclaims to the world a gospel which claims the allegiance of the world for God, which it resists, and the world in its will to isolate itself from God stands condemned. Thus on the one hand the Church is separated from the world, even though on the other hand it is thrust into it with the message of forgiveness and reconciliation.

This tension is provisional, however, for by its very nature the Church stretches towards the consummation of Christ's Kingdom, the final overthrow of the forces of darkness and evil. Because even now it is united to Jesus Christ who is risen and ascended, it possesses an invulnerable hope, as it waits for the coming of the Lord and the redemption of the body when the whole creation will be renewed. Until then the Church on earth is a provisional and proleptic form of the Kingdom of Christ, but when he comes the Church will attain its fulness and will be coincident with the whole Kingdom, spanning the new heaven and the new earth.

Meanwhile the Church lives by what the gospel proclaims, pouring itself out in service for Christ's sake. It preaches reconciliation, embodies it in its own members, and seeks it for all mankind. Until his coming again, Jesus Christ is

to be found wherever there is darkness, alienation and division, for he has made these things his own to overcome them. Men are bound to Jesus Christ not only by their humanity, but because he is the Lamb of God who took upon himself their selfishness, corruption and rebellion. Thus the Church also is bound with mankind in a solidarity of suffering and guilt, seeking to embody in its own life and in the midst of human divisions, the oneness of a fellowship of reconciliation and forgiveness. If the Church does not do this, but shrinks from its vocation at some point of tension and division, it calls in question its own reconciliation and cuts the lifeline which binds it to the Saviour; it alienates itself from the Kingdom of grace and quenches the Holy Spirit who is its very life.

#### **D. The One Spirit and the One Church**

Unity belongs to the very nature of the Church. Because there is one Christ and one Spirit, there is only one Body which is in organic union with Jesus Christ. He alone is the ground of that unity which the Holy Spirit maintains and upholds. The Church is one in the Spirit, and is summoned to express this unity in its life.

The nature of this unity is expressed in the ministry of the word and in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for in them Christ meets his Church and is active in its midst. These reveal the character of the mission of the Church in the world, the witness of all who share Christ's royal priesthood, the ministry of all who are called to be stewards of the mysteries of God. The commission of those who preach the word and administer the sacraments is derived from Christ through the apostolic foundation of the Church. In the power of the Spirit both word and sacraments are received within the institutional ordering of the Church's mission. Because it is above all in Holy Communion that the nature of the Church as a fellowship of love, and the nature of its order, are manifested, it is particularly at the Table of the Lord that division in the Church is scandalous, and reconciliation and order appear so sharply opposed.

It is in the problem of intercommunion that the difficulty of reconciling 'separated churches' becomes acute. The New Testament teaches us that the Holy Supper witnesses to our unity in Christ, that here above all we are renewed in our reconciliation with our Lord, and that by this renewal we may be reconciled with one another. If we cannot be reconciled to our brother apart from the reconciliation mediated to us in Communion we certainly cannot share in that reconciliation in the Body and Blood of Christ without being ourselves committed to work this out in our own flesh, that is, in all our human relations. Intercommunion between two estranged churches should imply both a resolution before communion to seek reconciliation with one another, and a resolution in and through communion to work out together a unity that is as actual in the body as our joint participation in the Holy Sacrament. Churches that take Holy Communion together commit themselves thereby to express their unity, by working out an agreement in outward discipline and polity consonant with the gospel of reconciliation.

### **IV. THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH**

In the Creed the Church is given a place within the articles of belief, under faith in the Holy Spirit, and is bracketed with forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. The doctrine of the Church is essentially evangelical, bound up with faith in the Holy Trinity and in the saving operation

of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is part of the gospel and not something peripheral and unimportant, about which differences of opinion are trivial. The Church indeed is not an independent object of faith, for considered in itself alone it is nothing. And yet it is included within faith in the one God, the one Mediator and the one Spirit.

### **A. The Church is the Work of the Holy Trinity**

The Church lives through the faithfulness of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and is grounded in the love that God is eternally in himself and the consubstantial communion of Father and Son in the Holy Spirit. As such the Church is the work of the three divine persons.

(i) It is the universal family of God the Father, sharing brotherhood with Christ, and with him sharing sonship to the Father. In this one household of God in heaven and on earth all are equally sons, and within it all barriers and divisions are abolished and proscribed.

(ii) The Church is the community of the reconciled, for in Christ God has abolished the enmity and sin that estranged us from him and has given us his Spirit.

(iii) The Church is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the communion of saints. It is the temple of the Spirit where spiritual sacrifices are continually made, the sanctuary of God on earth. It is a communion between believers who share in spiritual gifts, a fellowship whose special quality is that charity which is the most excellent gift of all.

### **B. The Church is the Body of Christ**

The New Testament uses the expression 'Body of Christ' in two ways. On the one hand it is used in a comprehensive sense to speak of the whole Christ, the new man in whom the new race is concentrated, the true vine that includes the branches. In that sense, Christ is the Church. But it cannot be said that the Church is Christ, for Christ is infinitely more than the Church, although in his grace he will not be without it.

On the other hand the New Testament uses the expression 'the Body of Christ' in such a way that the Church is distinguished from Christ as the body of which he is the head, as the servant of whom he is Lord. It thus draws its life and nature from him, sharing his very life as the incarnate Son of the Father. Only as it shares in the life of Christ is the Church to be regarded as his body.

The term 'Body of Christ' directs us to Christ and lays emphasis on him. The Body must be subject to the Head in all things, for he alone is the essence of the Church, and from him it derives its coherence and unity. Only in and through him does it have its mission in the gospel. At no point in our thinking and understanding of the Church can we allow anything in the Church to obscure Christ himself, to stand in his way, or set him aside, or subordinate him, even momentarily to another interest or end. From first to last Christ must be all in all.

The relation of the Church as Body to Christ as Head and Lord is determined by (i) the Incarnation, (ii) the Atonement, (iii) Pentecost.

(i) *The Church is the Church of the Word made Flesh*

The Incarnation fulfilled God's eternal decision to give himself to man in all his freedom and love. With the Incarnation the divine communication established in the election of Israel was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In this divine election the Church is grounded. It is an essentially corporate election, operating through history in the encounter of men and women with the word as they hear and respond to the gospel. Out of the incarnate life of the Son of God the Church arose and spread as the community sharing his revelation and love, initiated into the divine life of the one Holy Trinity and incorporated into the mission of the Son to bring God's saving love to all men.

(ii) *The Church is the Body of the crucified and risen Christ*

Between the Incarnation and the Church the Cross intervenes. The union between God and man in Christ could only be accomplished by the expiation of sin and the removal of enmity. Jesus identified himself with sinners in their alienation from God; hence the will of God to establish fellowship with man had to take the form of atonement and reconciliation. The Incarnation actually intensified the tragedy of man's estrangement from God, for it brought to bear God's judgment on man as never before. The Incarnation led inexorably to the crucifixion of Jesus. Thus our incorporation into Christ is on the ground of the atonement. It is his vicarious suffering on men's behalf, both in his representative capacity as our brother, and in his divine love and condescension as the eternal Son, which determines the relation of the Church as the Body, to Christ as Head.

The crucified Christ is the risen Lord, however, who has triumphed over all that separates men from God. The Church also is raised up in the power of his resurrection, and united in all its believers to the risen body of its Saviour.

(iii) *The Church is the Body of the ascended Lord — the communion of the Holy Spirit*

Through the gospel the Church is called into fellowship with God, and united with him by the baptism of the Spirit, so that its members are assimilated to his new humanity. Our incorporation into Christ by the Spirit is the subjective counterpart of the objective revelation and redemption of Incarnation and Atonement. In shedding on the Church the same Spirit which was poured out on himself, the fulfiller of the new Covenant, Christ makes it the heir of all its riches and promises.

This participation in Christ does not add anything to what he has already perfectly accomplished but is a sharing in the Spirit of Christ's self-offering to the Father, of the power of his resurrection, and of his divine-human life. The intervention of the Cross and of Pentecost between the Incarnation and the establishment of the Church means that the Church is not the extension of the Incarnation or the prolongation of Christ in the world. It is the body of sinners with which he has identified himself and which he has graciously assumed, uniting it to himself in the new Covenant, and refusing to be separated from it.

The fact that the New Testament speaks of the Church not only as the Body but as the Bride of Christ makes plain the distinction between Christ and his Church as a relationship in which the Church receives everything from its Lord. The Church remains distinct from Christ and must never be confounded with him. It must never try to usurp his place and so stand between men and Christ, arrogating to itself what belongs to Christ alone. Thus the oneness and the

difference, the likeness and the unlikeness between Christ and his Church are not to be confused. Its relation to him is both like and unlike the relation between his deity and his humanity. In him divine and human natures are united in such a way that they may not be separated from, or confused with, one another within the one divine person of the Son. It is similar with the divine-human nature of Christ and the human nature of the Church. The hypostatic union in Christ himself is unique. The union between Christ and the Church is a union between the one Son of God and the whole company of creaturely persons whom he has gathered into himself, yet within the Body the individual persons remain distinct. Although they share in the human nature of Christ and in his divine life, they are not swallowed up in deity, in such wise that their characters as creatures and persons are destroyed or submerged.

Furthermore, the union between Christ and his Church is between sinners and their Saviour. When the Son of God took upon himself our fallen flesh he healed and sanctified it in the very act of this assumption, condemning sin by his own holiness, and living from beginning to end, a perfect, holy, sinless life. But the Church is 'the Church of pardoned sinners, exulting in their Saviour.' Its sanctification and consecration in Christ does not alter the fact that its members remain sinners, constantly in need of pardon and healing and sanctification. Therefore until he comes again they must continually be renewed by his grace. Thus it is in Holy Communion that the Church ever becomes what Christ made it when he loved it and gave himself for it, and adopted it as his own body.

When in our speech about the Church we intend the whole Christ, Head and members, we must speak of it as sinless and holy, for we mean the concentration of the Church in Christ himself. But we may also mean the body of sinful men with which he identified himself in his life and death, that through the crucifixion of the sinful body he might raise it as a glorious Body clothed with his own holiness. Then we speak of the Church as constantly in need of forgiveness and constantly directed away from itself to Christ who is its justification and sanctification. It is in this Body, made up of sinful men and women, that Christ dwells and which he hallows, and uses as his instrument. This Church cannot dissociate itself from the sinners that make up its membership or reckon itself untarnished by their sin, and so separated from them. The Church stands on the side of those for whom Christ died and who have come under the judgment of God.

As the Body of Christ on earth the Church is not only related to Christ as one who has come, who was crucified, is risen and ascended, but also to the coming Christ at whose advent the creation will be judged and renewed. By his withdrawal at the ascension from visible, tangible contact with his disciples, Jesus Christ has directed his Church to the apostolic witness to his incarnation, for there it finds its root in the life and work of the Messiah, and in the structure of the messianic community. The coming of Christ in judgment means that the Church is summoned to repentance, looking for a judgment which will begin at the house of God. Nevertheless, renewed by the Spirit, it already partakes in that eternal life which it will receive in fulness in the new creation.

### C. The Life and Mission of the Church

The term 'communion' (*koinonia*) applied to the Church refers primarily to our participation in Jesus Christ, but also to the communion or fellowship which we have with one another on this basis. Through the Holy Spirit the being of the

Church is grounded in Christ and his gospel ; it is infused with the love of God which has come into the world with Jesus Christ. The essential nature of the Church therefore is *agape*, the love of God shed abroad in its midst, which the Church must express in its own life. Thus its life is inseparable from its mission. As the Father loves the Son, so the Son loves the Church : as the Son was sent by the Father, so the Church is sent by the Son. The nature and being of the Church are not to be thought of statically but dynamically, in terms of the movement of the divine love from God to men, gathering them into communion with himself.

(i) *The Church is a communion of love*

In the Spirit, God in his freedom is present in his creation. In sending the Spirit upon the Church, Jesus Christ is free to be present to it, not only without and from above, but from below and within it. In this way there is created a community within humanity in which the love of God is poured out by the Holy Spirit.

God is love, so that as the Church dwells in love, it dwells in God and God in it. In Jesus Christ the love of God was poured out for mankind, and the Church shares in this love. In him this love took the form of a servant and this, too, is the pattern for the Church. The Church follows in the steps of Christ, the Servant of God, not as co-redeemer with him, but that it too may be identified with the world in its sin and guilt, that it may bear it up in prayer and intercession, and spend itself in compassionate sympathy, to the end that all men may be confronted by the Saviour and brought within the active reign of Christ. To fulfil this mission the Church must itself be a fellowship of reconciling love and a fit instrument of that love of God which brought it into existence and determines its inmost being.

(ii) *The Church is the community informed with the mind of Christ*

By its nature the Church must be centred on Christ, not on itself. Christian discipleship is the disciplined habit of thinking and acting in Christ. The Church must let his mind be its mind, and its understanding must be continually renewed and transformed in him, its whole structure determined by his truth.

Here is its theological task. Theology is not primarily a function of individuals but of the Church, in which Christians are called to think together and learn from one another. Christian thinking is ecumenical thinking in which we share with one another and refuse to run off on private byways of our own. This does not mean that the lonely work of the scholar is not important, while it admits also the great importance of *lectio divina*, of meditation and prayer in deepening the thought and understanding of the Church. But this search for the mind of Christ is a corporate task ; it belongs to the Church to maintain doctrinal purity and to assimilate its thinking to the mind of Christ, so that it may in all things grow up into the Head, and stand before the world as witness to the truth.

(iii) *The Church is sent into the world as the servant and herald of Christ*

The Church, united in love and truth to Christ, is sent into the world to express his mind before all and to be the means of his self-revelation to mankind. When Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of God he entered into his universal Kingdom. In uniting himself to the Church on earth he endowed it with the

keys of the Kingdom and made it his instrument, that in and through the Church acting in his name he himself might be present, fulfilling his own ministry of reconciliation to the faithful.

Thus the function of the Church is not to be understood as the operation of its own immanent processes, but as the service of Christ's saving purpose. So far from regarding its place on earth as an end in itself, it considers itself solely as the servant of the Lord at work in his vineyard. Everything the Church has and is, is held in trust in the service of the ascended Lord who shall come again.

The whole life of the Church on earth is a fellowship of action in the service of the gospel, and all that concerns its edification and growth in history is subordinate to the lordship of Christ and the glory of God.

## V. THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE CHURCH

The unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the Church are affirmed in the historic creeds. They are attributes of Christ himself which the Church shares by reason of its unity with him.

### A. Unity

The unity of the Church derives ultimately from the unity of God. Because there is one God, there has been and will be but one people of God in all ages. The Church participates in that divine unity through Christ who alone brings the many members of the Church into one, giving them to share his unique relation with the Father in the Spirit, including it in one Body of which he is the Head. This unity is grounded in the Incarnation and Atonement. The one Word of God, in whom all things cohere, became flesh, and incorporates humanity into himself, bringing men through his expiatory and reconciling work into a new unity, as they believe in him. It can no more be destroyed than incarnation and atonement may be undone. Consequently, for the people of God to live in disunity, for the Church to allow the divisions of the world to penetrate its own life, is to live in contradiction to its own existence, to call in question its reconciliation and to act a lie against the atonement.

A divided Church is terrible, because it denies its relation to Christ. 'Is Christ divided?' A divided Church is therefore a direct contradiction of the atonement, an attack on Christ himself.

The unity of the Church derives from the one Spirit. When he came upon the Church at Pentecost he bound together the people of God, giving them one heart and mind. The love of God which he sheds abroad in their hearts heals their dissensions, and restores them to fellowship with one another. The continuance of division in the Church cannot but grieve the Spirit and cripple the Church, striking at the heart of its communion with God.

The unity of the Church is both bodily and spiritual. It expresses its unity in the Spirit in its physical existence in history, and in the relations in human society of its members, and of its own community. But its unity is not made with hands, or constructed out of the visible organization of the Church. Its source of unity does not lie in some principle that can be manipulated by man; its unity is given by God, begotten of its unity with Jesus Christ, and for this reason must take bodily and visible form.

There is no division, no final separation between the Church militant and the Church triumphant, for there is one communion of saints in heaven and on earth in which death has been swallowed up and destroyed.

## **B. Holiness**

In the ultimate sense, the holiness of the Church is its relation to God. 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.' Israel was a holy people because God set it apart, and hallowed himself in its midst. Thus the term 'holy' carries with it the notion of the Church as the place where God is present, and as the incarnation means the presence of the Holy One of God in the midst of humanity, so the Church is the community which shares the sanctification of Christ's most holy life, of his expiation of sin, and of his restoration of human nature in himself to communion with God.

'Holy Church' means that the Church is drawn into the holiness of God himself. It is the holiness of Christ which it shares by grace, anointed with his anointing, sharing his holy relation to the Father through the Spirit.

The Church partakes of this divine holiness through the working of the Holy Spirit. It is not holy because its members live virtuous lives, but because through the Holy Spirit Christ hallows the Church by his own indwelling presence. But because the Church shares this holiness, its members are called to live holy lives as in faith they rely on his faithfulness, and as they love one another with his divine compassion. There is therefore a once-for-allness about the holiness of the Church: its sanctification is already complete in Christ. This is the enduring reality into which Baptism initiates, and which is renewed in Holy Communion. Because of this, the Church knows it is not holy in itself; but is the company of sinners which Christ loved and with which he identified himself. Therefore from day to day and from age to age, until Christ comes again, it must live by putting off the old nature with its corruption and sin, and putting on the new nature with which it is clothed through the baptism of the Spirit, who unites it to the glorious Body of Jesus Christ.

However much the Church in history may be conditioned by its environment, subject to the pressures of history and affected by the character of a surrounding culture or by involvement in nations, classes or races of men, the ultimate truth about it is found in its relation to the Holy God in the Holy Spirit.

Over and against all earthly entities it has its own essential life, its own form and order, its inner law and being.

## **C. Catholicity**

The catholicity of the Church is the counterpart in space and time of the whole fulness of God. It is shown in its universal mission, by its horizons which are bounded only by creation itself, since the Church derives from the universal love of God. Because he is the same, yesterday, today and for ever, the Church keeps its identity, continuity and universality throughout all ages.

'Catholic' is the designation of the true Church over and against a false, and only so-called, Church. The false Church chooses to go its own way. Against heretical sects and apostate communities the catholic Church keeps its cohesion



in the truth which binds it to the one Lord through the gospel, as it distinguishes the Church from the world and all who deny the lordship of Christ. The Church is catholic or it is not the Church.

The Church is catholic because it shares in the love of God as it moves towards the whole world. It is therefore essentially missionary, reaching out in all directions, geographically to the ends of the earth, socially through all the diverse racial, cultural, economic and political forms of human society, persisting through all the changing movements and circumstances and events from generation to generation.

Behind this catholicity of extension in the mission of the Church, there is a catholicity of depth in the Church's ever-growing understanding of the fullness and comprehensiveness of the Holy Trinity. To be catholic means that the Christian is first and foremost a member of Christ and therefore of his Body, and only as such can he be an individual Christian in his own private existence, in his calling and duty. This catholicity in depth is shown in the Eucharist, which is the Lord's Supper as distinct from a private supper. It is not the private possession of any particular church, for it is the Lord's Table. Similarly the Christian faith is that of the whole Body of Christ, and not simply a set of ideas which are common to the members of the Church in association with one another. But it is as the faith of the one Body that it is confessed by the individual members of the Church. Insofar as individual opinions are regulated by obedience to Christ they are catholic opinions, but they are reached through the relations of the members of the Body with one another, in which each serves the other, as they jointly share in the truth which is in Jesus Christ.

This Church is not to be measured by worldly standards, nor known by historical inspection, but through faith in the Holy Trinity. It cannot contrive its own catholicity, any more than it can achieve holiness or unity by its human efforts. It is Christ who makes it catholic, the pillar and ground of truth against which the gates of hell cannot prevail.

#### **D. Apostolicity**

The apostolicity of the Church is that which binds the Church to the New Testament revelation. It thus supplies the criterion by which we know that we have to do with the one, holy, catholic Church. The Church that is not apostolic cannot be catholic, for if it is not apostolic today, it is not one with the Church founded by the apostles. If it has changed its identity, it cannot be catholic. Similarly, apostolicity governs the holiness and unity of the Church. As in the incarnation the words and deeds of Christ are inseparable, so in the apostolic foundation of the Church, the word and deed of Christ are inseparable. The apostolic Church is the one which remains in continuity with Christ in word and deed, in teaching and ordinances.

(i) The apostolic Church is the Church created in the sending of the Son by the Father.

The sending of the apostles by Christ corresponds to the mission of the Son. As the Father endowed him with the Spirit, so Christ breathed his Spirit on the apostles, sending them to proclaim the gospel of reconciliation to men. In that sense the apostolic foundation of the Church corresponds to the baptism of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Historically the Church is founded on the apostles : supernaturally it is founded by the outpouring of the Spirit. Hence the Church has always this double relation to Christ. The two missions, of the apostles and of the Spirit, are made one in the new Covenant which Christ established in his body and blood and fulfilled within the Church in the communion of the Spirit. It is the continuity of the redeemed life of the Church in Christ which is the heart of the apostolic succession, or continuity in the apostolically founded Church. Hence all members through baptism partake in the apostolic succession, all share in the one apostolic mission and are called to take part in the ministry of the gospel.

(ii) The apostolic Church means that it is grounded on an unrepeatable foundation. There can be no more laying of the foundation, any more than there can be other incarnations or further crucifixions of Christ. In this sense the apostolate cannot be extended in time on the stage of this world. It is not the initial stage of some continuous process, but the persisting foundation of the Church. In this sense there can be no talk of apostolic succession, for the apostolate cannot be transmitted.

There is, however, another sense in which we must speak of the apostolic Church, as the Church that continues to follow the apostles. In this sense we may properly speak of an apostolic succession. This does not mean that new apostles arise from generation to generation in the seat of the apostles, continuing their inspiration or exercising their judicial authority. But it does imply that there is a continuous mission and ministry of the Church, dependent on that of the apostles, through which the historic Church continues to be schooled in the apostolic witness to the gospel, and to be obedient to this witness, as it is transmitted through the apostolic tradition of the New Testament. The handing on of the Canon of Scriptures, the persistence of the apostolic doctrine or rule of faith, the succession of a ministry dependent on its apostolic foundation, are interconnected. If the ministerial succession is separated from the apostolic word in the Scriptures, from subordination to it, or from sound doctrine as attested in the rule of faith, it is a false succession, even though the links may be historically unbroken. But it may also be true that if ministerial succession is broken here and there, its defects may be amply made up in the coherent succession of the whole apostolic tradition, for underlying it all is the faithfulness of Jesus Christ who sends his Spirit to the Church and continues to fulfil his own ministry within it.

(iii) In its most definite sense the term 'apostolic' refers to the Holy Scriptures as the source and norm of the Church's existence throughout history. The Church lives by the New Testament, as the canon of its life and faith, and is begotten from age to age in this apostolic tradition through the gospel which they handed on, as it continues to be built up through the exegetical study of the Holy Scriptures.

Through the apostolic witness in the Scriptures, the Church understands its pattern to be the obedience of Christ as the Son and Servant. The Church which fails to conform to Scripture, which refuses to be reformed, cleansed, purged by the word of God, thereby declares itself to be other than the one holy catholic Church. For to be this true Church means that through all its history the Church maintains the teaching of the apostles delivered to us in the Holy Scriptures, and does not change this foundation by subtracting from it, or adding to it, something other than what has already been laid.

## VI. THE ONE LORD AND THE MANIFOLD MINISTRY

### A. The one mediator and minister

Our Lord Jesus Christ is both our advocate and high priest before the Father and the great shepherd of the sheep, ruling over his Church through his word and by his Spirit. His mediatorial work extends to the bestowal of manifold gifts for ministry in the Church and through the Church to the world. These gifts are not given by the Lord to be exercised in independence of him ; all gifts and grace for ministry are dependent on his constant action through the Spirit, so that as mediator of this grace he is the supreme minister in the Church.

This view finds simple and direct expression in the commission of the risen Lord, 'Go and make disciples . . . lo, I am with you always' (Matt. 28. 19 f, cf. the summary account of the apostolic ministry in Mark 16. 20). It is implied in the twofold representation of the Church as the Body of Christ in the Pauline writings. Where Christ is viewed as the whole Body (I Cor. 12), the action of the members is that of the Lord in them. In the application of the figure which makes Christ the Head and the Church the Body (Ephesians-Colossians), he it is who commands the members to perform his will. In both cases the minister is Christ through the Church. So surely as the Church is inseparable from Christ and lives by his life, so surely are the ministries of the Church inseparable from the ministry of Christ ; they are the agencies of his operation.

While this is no new insight, the consequences that flow from it are not always drawn. If, for example, Christ is the bearer of all gifts of ministry and operates through them, none in any community of which he is the Head may be despised, nor may any be regarded with pride as though they were not the gift of his grace. Ultimately it is Christ who is the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher of his Church, and he is the inspiration of every act of charity, miracle, leadership etc. among his people. To despise any *charisma* or ministry given by the Lord is to despise the Christ who bestows it.

There is one elemental continuity of ministry in the Church without which neither Church nor ministry would be thinkable, namely that provided by the presence in the Church of the ascended Lord by his Spirit and *his* continuing ministry through the members of his Body. All means by which he does this are of subordinate significance compared with the action of him who is the same yesterday, today and for ever. This is not to minimize, still less deny, the modes whereby the institutions of the visible Church are maintained through the generations, but it should instil in us a humility and sense of proportion as we weigh their significance.

The perpetual ministry of the one Lord and Mediator in his Church is a self-consistent one. There can be no schism between the ministry he exercised in the days of his flesh and that which he now exercises from the right hand of the Father through his Body, the Church. As he assumed the form of a servant for the achievement of redemption and bade his disciples to walk in the same steps (Mark 10. 42-45), so by his Spirit he leads the members of his Body to exercise a like ministry of humility and sacrifice. Ever and anew the Church has been subject to the temptation to misinterpret its function in the world, on the one hand by seeking a position of power, from which it may strive to christianize the structures of the secular order, and on the other, in reaction from this, to withdraw from

contact with the world in order to maintain its purity ; but the Lord who mingled with publicans and sinners ministers to their counterparts in all ages. He calls his Church to embody his ministry of reconciliation in its life as well as in its proclamation. Herein lies the significance of the ministry of those members of the Body whose daily avocation sets them within the alienated world : occupying the frontier between Church and world, they form vital points of contact between Church and world and so perform a ministry of incalculable importance.

## B. Charismata and Diakonai

The foregoing considerations provide a standpoint from which we may estimate the relation between the special ministries performed within the Church (as apostle, teacher, etc.) and the multifarious ministries of its members. The one Lord has poured out his Spirit upon the whole Church, resulting in manifestations of prophetic gifts in the entire company of Christ's waiting people. In this manner the desire of Moses, that all the Lord's people should be prophets and that he would put his Spirit upon them (Num. 11. 29), was brought to fulfilment. The variety of *charismata* bestowed on the members of the Body for their ministry is astonishingly large (cf. the enumerations in Rom. 12. 5 ff, and I Cor. 12.8 ff). It is worthy of attention that in the apostolic instruction this variety of gifts is unreservedly set to the account of the sovereign action of the Lord by the Spirit. Whereas the New Testament bears witness to more than one way by which the Spirit was received and his gifts imparted, the differentiation of those gifts was entirely at the divine disposal ; they could be the subject of prayerful entreaty by those who wished to receive them (I Cor. 14.13 ff) but they were not at the behest of men.

While the gifts of ministry are apportioned to men by the exalted Lord, they are not therefore at the individual's disposal — for use at his sole discretion in disregard of other members and the authority of the Church's leaders. An uninhibited exercise of gifts in the worship of the congregation would lead to disorder and even to anarchy. Accordingly they must be regulated ; I Corinthians 12-14 provides the classic instance of apostolic ordering of gifts of ministry within a community. Admittedly this particular instance is 'accidental,' in that its statement is due to a request for guidance from the Church of Corinth, but it reveals the kind of ordering of ministry within the Church such as would have been normal in the process of founding and nurturing a Church in the apostolic era. Strikingly enough, the most extended exposition of ministry in the New Testament (Eph. 4. 7 ff), sets out from the dictum 'Each one of us has been given his gift, his due portion of Christ's bounty' (NEB). The ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, are said to have been given 'to equip God's people for work in his service,' that by the conjoint ministry of the whole Church in dependence on its Head, all the members might attain to mature manhood, 'measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ' (see Eph. 4.13-16). A more powerful statement could hardly be framed to indicate the importance both of the special ministries set within the Body of Christ and those given to the members generally, as well as the dependence of both on the one Lord. He maintains the unity of the Body and its ministries and enables the growth of all in himself. The nature of the Church as the people of the Spirit sets both the goal and the bounds of the labours of the special ministries.

The names of the special offices in the Church have varied widely, in the apostolic age as in subsequent times. Broadly speaking their function may be summed up in the phrase 'pastoral stewardship.' A minister is called to act as a shepherd under the great shepherd of the flock, whose sacrificial service provides a normative pattern for the pastoral ministry of all time (John 10) ; he is also to be a responsible steward of the mysteries of God and of the household of faith generally. Such ministry is directed to the Church and to the world. The Church needs care and oversight in relation to its worship, in its instruction and discipline, and in enabling it to meet the exigencies of everyday life in this world ; it also requires leadership in carrying out its mission to the world, so that the whole company of Christ's people may go forth, under the direction of its risen Lord, to make disciples of all nations.

As with all the gifts and ministries, apostleship is primarily a characteristic of Christ himself. His work was apostolic both before his resurrection (Mark 9. 37 ; Matt. 15. 24 ; Luke 4. 18) and after (Acts 3. 26). God's sending of Jesus has its counterpart, and in a sense its continuation, in the commissioning of the apostles (Matt. 10. 40 ; 28. 18-19 ; John 20. 21 ; Acts 9. 17 ; 10. 29). In their initial calling the Twelve were given a double function. They are the nucleus of the reformed Israel, and at the same time they have a mission to Israel (Mark 3. 14 ; 6. 7). They are the new patriarchs for whom twelve thrones are appointed in the 'regeneration' when the Son of Man shall be enthroned and to whom he 'covenanted' a Kingdom, that they might eat and drink at the messianic feast (Matt. 19. 28 ; Luke 22. 29).

This eschatological aspect of the status of the Twelve, and the symbolism of their number which is deeply rooted in the traditions of Israel, is important, for it provides a most significant connecting link between the Old Testament and the New : a link which joined the apostles' preaching to the testimony of the prophets, who pointed to the event which the former were commissioned to declare. It is one of the factors which made it possible for the Church to read the Scriptures as a book about Christ, and for apostles and prophets together to be the foundation of its life and witness.

The resurrection enabled them to understand their vocation. They are to share in the kingdom of the Son of Man, but they are to fulfil their apostolic office through witnessing to the gospel events throughout the world, preaching repentance and forgiveness. Their witness is that which calls the Church into being. As witnesses they are necessarily the chief evangelists, founders and directors of the Church which itself witnesses to the risen Christ to whom they could give authentic testimony. Their authority seems to reside in their status as eye-witnesses, and in their specific commissioning by the Lord. They are guarantors of the Church's preaching, so that the tradition which ultimately rests upon their authority forms the norm and criterion of all subsequent development. An apostle cannot be ordained as such, for his apostleship comes directly from Christ, conferred either during his earthly life (with a re-commissioning for the universal witness after the resurrection), in a post-resurrection appearance in the case of Paul (cf. especially Acts 26. 17) or by a direct indication of the Lord's will in the case of Matthias.

Yet every form of ministry in the Church is dependent upon the apostles in so far as it is concerned with witness to the apostolic gospel. The pastoral and administrative functions of the apostles as the original missionaries to Israel and the

world devolved upon others during the evolution of the ministry, from the appointment of the Seven at Jerusalem to the threefold order of the second century. In this sense all ministry is traceable to the apostles. The evidence of Acts and of I Clement shows the apostles directly appointing local ministries in the churches which they established. This is not sufficient, however, to prove that ministerial order in the Church as a whole was in any way directly constituted by apostolic appointment. Nor is the later conception of the apostles as legislators for the entire Church supported by New Testament evidence. The supreme authority of the apostles as witnesses and guarantors of the gospel did not prove irreconcilable with a large measure of diversity in the Church's life and order, and even with disagreement upon the nature of its mission and the policy of carrying it out, as we see from the relations between Paul and James, and perhaps between Paul and the Twelve or some of their number. Luke's picture of the central authority of the Jerusalem church is centred upon James, who was not an apostle in the full sense, rather than upon the Twelve as legislators.

The apostles stand in a unique relation to the redeemed community as its foundations and gates (Rev. 21. 14). In this sense their office is not transferable and they can have no successors. They are still, however, at the same time missionary witnesses by whom the Church is constituted and also a part of the Church, the nucleus of a community called to witness and service. The unifying factor between the apostles and the whole Church is the continuing ministry of the glorified Christ through the Spirit. The ministry of the Church, as a priestly body, is the ministry of the one Priest; the apostles' ministry in bringing all nations within that body, is an operation of the ministry of Christ through the Spirit. It is the present ministry of the risen Christ, not a vicarious perpetuation of the ministry of the historical figure of Jesus by his successors.

The perpetual ministry of the ascended Lord affords the fundamental continuity in the ministry of the Church through the ages — a continuity not less real for its being invisible. It is but to be expected that the visible ministries of the Church should themselves manifest a corresponding continuity in successive generations, and that with regard to both orders of ministry, i.e. those performed by the total membership of the Body and those that have been given by the Lord for their aid. It has been a grievous loss to the Church that a considerable weakening in the vigour of the ministries of the members generally has taken place; nevertheless continuity in these manifold ministries has been maintained as the Church has upheld the apostolic faith, has continued to observe the apostolic ordinances of word and sacrament, has experienced the fellowship of the Spirit and has borne witness to the gospel before the world. Such continuity has been possible because there has also been a succession of faithful shepherds of the flock and stewards of the household, who have maintained obedience to the apostolic gospel and its ordinances.

One mode of continuity among the 'pastoral stewards' for which special claims have been made is that of episcopal ordination. There is formidable support in Christian tradition and in the practice of a large part of the Church today for the view that such ordination is the *sine qua non* of succession in the apostolic ministry. In face, however, of the supreme significance of the one abiding ministry of Christ, exercised through all ministries of the Church, this may be questioned; more positively, the fact and the nature of the ministry of Christ through his servants renders void sweeping judgments on the non-episcopal ministries exercised in the Church. On the other hand, it is a question that should

be pondered by all non-episcopal churches whether episcopal ordination is not valuable as a *sign* of the continuance of the ministries set by the Mediator in his Church through all generations ; a sign that may fairly be claimed to express historical continuity in the ministry, unity with other contemporary ministries in the Church, and the apostolicity of the ministry. If episcopal succession were interpreted in this light, elements in it which have caused offence in many quarters would in large measure disappear and an opportunity would be afforded for its reconsideration by churches which do not possess it.

## VII. THE CHURCH AND THE CONSUMMATION

The mystery and destiny of the Church is its union with Jesus Christ and its partaking through him in all the riches of divine grace and glory. The Church does not derive from below but from above, yet it does not exist apart from the people that make up its membership, for they have been created and elected by God to have fellowship with himself. While there is one people and one Church of God from the beginning of creation to the end, there are three stages or phases in its life. It took a preparatory form before the incarnation as in the covenant mercies of the Father one people was called and separated out as the instrument through which all peoples were to be blessed. It was given a new and permanent form in the Church of Jesus Christ, for he gathered up and reconstructed the one people of God in himself, and poured out his Spirit upon broken and divided humanity so that his brothers share equally in the life and love of the Father as the new undivided race. But it is still to take on its final and eternal form when Christ comes again to judge and renew his creation, for then the Church, which now exists within the conditions and ambiguous forms of this passing age, will be manifested as the new creation clothed with the righteousness of Christ, eternally serving and sharing in the glory of God.

In the meantime, the Church lives and is at work in history where it fulfils its divinely given mission to bring the gospel of the saving love of God to the whole world. The Church thus lives in the world and is concluded with it as the object of the divine love in grace and judgment, but the Church also lives through its union with Christ in the new divine order that has overtaken mankind and raised up the Church in the pouring out of God's Spirit upon human flesh. In the world and yet not of it, necessarily involved in its tragedies and sins, yet involved by grace in the divine life and tasting already the powers of the age to come, the Church is stretched out in eager expectation towards the consummation of God's eternal purpose for all creation. If it is the rooting and grounding of the Church in the gospel and in its union with Jesus Christ crucified and risen, that gives it its being and life, it is the Church's union with the ascended and advent Jesus Christ through the Spirit, that gives to its being and life the direction and urgency that characterize its mission.

Hence the Church that is united to Christ lives in irrepressible hope and joy, and yet in deep humility and penitence. Its union with the risen Lord requires that it carry in its body the dying of the Lord, so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in its mortal flesh. In this way its life is renewed day by day, even within the world that passes away under the divine judgment. Through the Spirit which binds it to the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, it puts off the old man, the image of the earthly with its sin and error and darkness, and puts

on the new man, the image of the heavenly with its love and truth and light. And the day presses hard upon it when Jesus Christ will finally change the body of its humiliation and make it like his glorious Body. Throughout its history the Church fulfils its mission in a double identification : with Christ in his holiness, and with the world in its sin.

The Church lives by identifying itself with Christ in his holiness because he has united it to the Body in which he has overcome sin and sanctified our human nature. But throughout its history the Church lives in the flesh where sin is lodged and in the world where the body is still fallen and awaits its redemption. Therefore its very identification with Christ's holiness involves it in a life of penitence in the world ; and it follows that the Church cannot fulfil its mission in history by contracting out of the guilt or suffering of mankind, for that would sever its relations with the Saviour who died as the Lamb of God bearing away the sins of the world. Thus not only is the Church as a solidarity composed of sinners, bound up with the solidarity of all men, but through its solidarity with Jesus Christ, it is identified with sinners under divine judgment, and with the solidarity of mankind in suffering and guilt. It is in this identification of Christ with the world and the Church, and in its identification with Christ and the world, that the Church lives with the prayer that the Saviour has put into its mouth : 'Our Father, . . . forgive us our sins as we forgive them that sin against us.'

It is in this identification with mankind that the Church is allowed to echo on earth, through the ineffable utterance of the Spirit, the heavenly intercessions of its Mediator above. That is the heart of its mission in the midst of history, in the ordeal of struggle with the powers of darkness in which it shares in the Passion of Christ. Yet it is through this union with the crucified and enthroned Lamb that the Church also shares in his triumph, partaking even now in the power of his resurrection, so that throughout history its life and work in solidarity with mankind under the sign of the Cross is shot through and through with the promise and hope of victory. Its union with Christ in his death, resurrection and ascension is the pledge of its participation in the great consummation when its Lord will come to make all things new. Hence the Church of Christ moves forward through the agony and tragedy of mankind towards ultimate victory with an irrepressible optimism born of the Cross and Resurrection. He who made the terrible Cross and all its shame the instrument for the healing of the nations is able to make all things work together for good and even to make the wrath of man to praise him. He who brought Jesus Christ again from the dead is able by the same power to make his love triumph over the despair and self-destruction of mankind, raising his creation out of death and destruction in a new heaven and a new earth.

Because of this hope in coming regeneration the Church cannot but look upon itself and its life in history with contrition and repentance. Its very identification with Christ in his perfection and holiness forbids it to confuse its historical manifestations, either in its individual constituents or in its corporate forms, with that which it will be when it meets and sees its Lord and is perfectly transformed into his image. In its union with Christ through the Spirit, in its expectation of his advent to judge and renew all things, the Church knows that they are not all Israel who are of Israel, that they are not all Church who are of the Church. God alone knows who belong to him. Only Christ can divide the children of light from the children of darkness. But that judgment begins with the house of God and even now takes place through the preaching of the gospel and presses towards its consummation at the end.



Likewise the Church knows that in all its mission and ministry it must distinguish the earthen vessel from the heavenly treasure. It cannot but submit to God's merciful but severe judgment its historical structures and patterns as the temporal scaffolding that must at last be torn away so that there may stand to view the new Jerusalem, the temple of God which is not made by hands, a temple that knows no division and has no boundaries other than the universal love of God.

Face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Church acknowledges that it has proved an unprofitable servant again and again. It confesses that it has failed to fulfil his command to take the gospel to the Jew first, and that throughout long centuries it has allowed anti-Semitism to be fostered among its members ; that it has muffled its witness to the Cross of Christ and failed to take the gospel to all nations, allowing other gods and allegiances to reign where Jesus Christ alone is King ; that it has allowed the divisions of the world to penetrate into its own life, so that estrangements have arisen and become entrenched within the one family and people of God.

Because the Church advances to meet its coming Lord to whom it will give an account of its stewardship of the gospel, it is impelled by the Spirit to set its own house in order by embodying in its life the peace through the blood of Christ which it proclaims. By deed and word, by life and by witness, it must extend to all nations and peoples the love of God the Father who will have all men to repent and live together in brotherhood, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ out of whose fulness alone come forgiveness and renewal, and the communion of the Holy Spirit through which the divided peoples of the earth can be brought together to share in the life and fellowship of the one eternal God.

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\* These members were present at the final session in 1962 and took part in the preparation of this report.



